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**National mentalities; European identities : the impact of defence on the construction of national and European identity : a comparative case study of Britain (1960-February 1963), Italy and France (1956-1958)**

Dahm, Evelyn Pignatari

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**NATIONAL MENTALITIES; EUROPEAN IDENTITIES:  
THE IMPACT OF DEFENCE ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF  
NATIONAL AND EUROPEAN IDENTITY**

**A COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY OF BRITAIN (JANUARY 1960-FEBRUARY 1963), ITALY  
AND FRANCE (1956-1958).**

**Submitted by Evelyn Pignatari Dahm for the degree of Ph.D. in War Studies at  
King's College London (University of London), August 2001.**

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*To my husband, Michael, whom I know to be my life's greatest blessing.*

*And in memory of Lala*



## ABSTRACT

Arguments negating the potential for the construction of European identity often hinge upon a distinction between the artificiality of European identity and the more ‘authentic’ nature of national identity that makes the latter difficult to transcend. This thesis takes issue with such arguments, and offers an alternative analysis of national and European identity based on three central premises; (1) the constructed, or instrumentalist, nature of national identity; (2) the impact of defence on the construction of national identity; and (3) the impact of defence on the construction of European identity.

The thesis first undertakes an inquiry into whether national identity is ‘constructed’ or ‘primordial’ through a review of the theoretical debate on national identity in existing literature. The thesis subsequently examines the construction, and manifestation, of conceptualizations of ‘nation’ and ‘Europe’ in three states; Britain, France and Italy. For each country, the thesis first presents a series of ‘historical snapshots’ to assess the impact of defence in constructing ideas of the nation and Europe. The thesis then examines the relevance of defence to identity in the context of legislative and press debates on defence and European integration from 1960-February 1963 (Britain), and 1956-1958 (France and Italy).

The thesis proposes a framework for the analysis of the impact of defence on national and European identity based on five ‘construction’ processes in which defence plays an instrumental role: conceptualization, dissemination, preservation, confirmation and reaffirmation of identity.

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# INTRODUCTION

*“....we give consideration to the mental attitudes of the French and German people, because we are both of the opinion that all policy is in the long run based on mental attitudes.”<sup>1</sup>*

*The European Defence Community ‘....was not so much a matter of military effectiveness as political soundness...The critical issue was not the size of the divisions or other technicalities, but the creation of a common European outlook, a “solidarity of destiny.”<sup>2</sup>*

This thesis is fundamentally concerned with the relationship between defence and the construction of identity, both at the national and European level. This concern is not theoretical and abstract; rather the thesis seeks to contribute to the broader and ongoing analytical inquiry into the prospects for further European integration. In this sense, the underlying objective of the thesis is to examine the extent to which defence may contribute to the construction of a European identity that replaces national identity *relatively*, rather than *absolutely*, as the ‘highest overarching unit of an individual’s loyalty.’<sup>3</sup>

Efforts to integrate Europe and create a European identity are not a new phenomenon. In the past, however, such efforts have often been undertaken by would-be hegemonic powers with mastery of Europe as their aim, and warfare as their means. Napoleon for instance, sought to create a continent with ‘....one European code, one European court of appeal....’, with a single currency and a European Academy, through which ‘....Europe was to become one family and one people’.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, ‘....if she had

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<sup>1</sup> General De Gaulle and Chancellor Adenauer, Joint Communiqué, cited in ‘Dr. Adenauer’s Praise for de Gaulle “No Nationalist” he says’ Daily Telegraph 17 September 1958.

<sup>2</sup> Pascaline Winand, Eisenhower, Kennedy, and the United States of Europe (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993), p.28.

<sup>3</sup> Rupert Emerson, From Empire to Nation The Rise to Self-assertion of Asian and African Peoples (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press 1960), pp.95-96.

<sup>4</sup> Pim den Boer, ‘Europe to 1914: the Making of an Idea’ in Kevin Wilson and Jan van der Dussen (eds.), The History of the Idea of Europe revised edition (Milton Keynes: Open University; London; New York: Routledge, 1995), p.68.

won the wars in 1914 and 1939, Germany, in her way, would have unified Europe.’<sup>5</sup>

Defence in the context of Europe has therefore often meant preservation of the *nation* and *national identity* against a Europe of coercion, a Europe dominated by a single state anxious to subjugate national identities to its own.

Yet defence has also served as a context for the promotion of European identity. In 1950, for instance, the European Defence Community (EDC) was presented as “....the panacea for Europe’s difficulties, a symbol of its regeneration and a touchstone of its future....”<sup>6</sup> Jean Monnet, architect of Franco-German rapprochement, emphasized that

....the matter was not so much military effectiveness as political soundness...The critical issue was not the size of the divisions or other technicalities, *but the creation of a common European outlook, a “solidarity of destiny”* [emphasis added].<sup>7</sup>

Similarly, when Dwight Eisenhower, then Commander in Chief of NATO forces, commented that the symbolism of French and Germans wearing the same uniform was essentially a political, rather than military matter, Monnet responded: “[...] it’s in that order that problems come up in Europe. *What we have to do first of all is make people aware that they’re facing the future together.*”<sup>8</sup>

Critics of projects to construct a European identity, however, question not only the degree to which a common European outlook exists, but also the extent to which a European identity can be created. European identity is dismissed as an elite phenomenon and characterized as artificial in marked contrast to the natural and inherent national identities of the European Union’s member states. For such critics, genuine collective identity can only be represented by, rather than promulgated through, symbols and

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<sup>5</sup> Lieutenant Commander R. K. Dibble, R.N., Towards a European Navy - The Problems and Opportunities in Integrating European Navies in a European Security System (Department of War Studies Folio, King’s College London, 1971), p.277.

<sup>6</sup> Richard P. Stebbins cited in Winand, p.30.

<sup>7</sup> Winand, p.28.



imagery. Attempts to base a European identity on imagery and symbolism are consequently perceived as tantamount to an admission of its artificiality.<sup>9</sup> This thesis takes issue with such criticisms, and offers an alternative analysis of national and European identity based on three central premises; (1) the constructed, or instrumentalist, nature of national identity; (2) the role of defence in the construction of national identity; and (3) the role of defence in the construction of European identity. These premises stem from an examination of three principal research questions.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND LOCATION OF THESIS IN EXISTING LITERATURE

Arguments negating the potential for the construction of European identity often hinge upon a distinction between the artificiality of European identity and the more 'authentic' nature of national identity that makes the latter difficult to transcend. If it can be convincingly argued that national identity is constructed, one theoretical objection to the construction of European identity may be removed. Moreover, if defence can be demonstrated to have had an influence on the construction of national identity, then the notion of constructing European identity within the context of defence may also appear more legitimate. Three key questions therefore together constitute the essential research problem of this thesis; 1) Is national identity constructed, and how? 2) What role has defence played in the construction of national identity? 3) Can defence play a role in the construction of European identity?

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<sup>8</sup> Jean Monnet in Jean Monnet, *Memoirs* tr. Richard Mayne (New York: Doubleday & Company Inc., 1978), p.359.

<sup>9</sup> See, for instance, Ulf Hedetoft, *Signs of Nations: Studies in the Political Semiotics of Self and Other in Contemporary European Nationalism* (Aldershot; Brookfield, Vt.: Dartmouth Publishing Company, c1995), p.125; Gerard Delanty, *Inventing Europe: Idea, Identity, Reality* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), especially pp.1-3 and p.128.

## Research Question I: Is national identity constructed?

An investigation of this question constitutes part of the methodology of the thesis and a comprehensive debate on the aspects and origins of national identity is consequently not reproduced here.<sup>10</sup> In general, however, two main theoretical perspectives on national identity can be discerned; the *primordial* and the *instrumentalist*.<sup>11</sup>

### *Primordialists*

Broadly speaking, primordialists perceive the nation as natural and inherent, emphasizing the significance of ‘ethnic’ elements of national identity such as race, common language, common culture, or common territory in shaping national identity. The extremes of this approach are well represented by Pierre Van den Berghe, who locates sentiments of national and ethnic identity in the racial camp,<sup>12</sup> or Robert Herder and Johann Fichte, who argue for the inherent relationship between language, culture and national identity.<sup>13</sup>

For some authors, certain nations are more primordial than others. Hugh Seton-Watson, for instance, distinguishes between the ‘slow, natural, evolution’ of national identity in ‘old’ states like France, and the constructed, and implicitly less genuine, identity in ‘new’ states like Italy.<sup>14</sup> Anthony Smith similarly differentiates between the old, continuous nations of Western Europe, which emerged as the ‘unintended

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<sup>10</sup> For a fuller discussion on whether national identity is constructed or inherent see Chapter One of this study, ‘Aspects and Origins of National Identity.’

<sup>11</sup> This distinction is made by Paul R. Brass in *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison* (New Delhi, Sage, 1991), p.74; by Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), p.4; and by Ernest Gellner, *Nationalism* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), p.90.

<sup>12</sup> See, for instance, Pierre Van den Berghe, ‘Race and Ethnicity: A Sociobiological Perspective’, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 1 (3) (1978), and ‘Does Race Matter? *Nations and Nationalism* 1 (3) (1995). See also Joshua Fishman, ‘Social Theory and Ethnography in ‘Peter Sugar (ed.), *Ethnic Diversity and Conflict in Eastern Europe* (Santa Barbara: Clio, 1980).

<sup>13</sup> See Robert Reinhold Ergang, *Herder and the Foundations of German Nationalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931), pp.148-152, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation* tr. R.F. Jones and G.H. Turnbull (Chicago; London: Open Court Publishing Company, 1922), pp.56-68.



consequence' of bureaucratic incorporation before the rise of nationalism, and Eastern European countries, where, he argues, identity was constructed more deliberately.<sup>15</sup>

### *Instrumentalists*

Particularly since the late 1970's and early 1980s, however, a greater trend has been in evidence in works highlighting the constructed, or *instrumentalist* nature of national identity. Seminal works including Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.) *The Invention of Tradition*, Benedict Anderson's *The Imagined Community* and Liah Greenfeld's *Nationalism* have lent greater weight and credibility to the argument that national identity is not inherent, nor are today's nations the inevitable outcomes of the preordained destiny of chosen peoples.<sup>16</sup>

At one end of the instrumentalist spectrum are 'modernist'<sup>17</sup> authors like Anderson and Hobsbawm, Elie Kedourie, Walker Connor and Ernest Gellner, who perceive nations and national identity as 'mythical constructs' of nationalism;<sup>18</sup> a mass phenomenon made possible only by the advent of new transmission mechanisms in the modern era.<sup>19</sup> For these authors, nations could not possibly have been constructed before the Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Centuries.

Modernists differ, however, in the emphasis they place on given 'modern mechanisms.' For Anderson, the advent of print capitalism permitted individuals to

<sup>14</sup> See, for instance, Hugh Seton-Watson, *Nations and States* (London: Methuen, 1977), pp.7-8.

<sup>15</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (Nevada: Nevada Press, 1991), p.100. Elsewhere, however, Smith remarks on the myths and memories that make up English and French identity. See Smith *Origins*, p.2; Anthony D. Smith, 'National Identity and the Idea of European Unity' *International Affairs* 68 (1) (1992), p.61.

<sup>16</sup> See, for instance, Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983); Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1994); Josep R. Llobera, *The God of Modernity* (Providence, Oxford: Berg, 1994); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities- Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso Editions, 1983).

<sup>17</sup> The expression is used by John Hutchinson, *Modern Nationalism* (London: Fontana, 1994), pp.3-7.

<sup>18</sup> Hutchinson *Nationalism*, p.6



‘imagine’ their existence in a broader shared community; Gellner instead emphasizes the importance of industrialization, urbanization and mass education in rendering the nation politically significant, and in disseminating a ‘high culture’ which leads individuals to identify with the nation; for Hobsbawm it is the ‘invention of tradition’ by state elites trying to manage rapid social transformation in the modern era that allows the construction of seemingly inherent and natural nations.<sup>20</sup>

At the other end of the instrumentalist spectrum are the less ‘modernist’ authors,<sup>21</sup> including Jacques Le Goff, Susan Reynolds, Colette Beaune and Josep Llobera, who, while not subscribing to the ‘teleological’ view of perpetual, pre-destined nations, allow for the construction of nations and national identity in the pre-modern era, and perceive the significance of pre-modern mechanisms in the dissemination of this identity.<sup>22</sup> For example, in her work on myths and symbols in medieval France, Colette Beaune illustrates the influence of religious imagery in disseminating the idea of the nation to the illiterate population.<sup>23</sup> Llobera also writes of the twelfth and thirteenth-century myths of common ancestry created by ecclesiastics to bind disparate peoples together.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> See for instance, Elie Kedourie *Nationalism* (London: Hutchinson, 1960), p.69, Walker Connor, ‘When is a Nation?’ *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 13 (1) (1990), p.99-100, Ernest Gellner, *Nations*, pp.48-49, Hobsbawm and Ranger (eds.), p.14.

<sup>20</sup> Anderson *Communities*, pp.42-43; Ernest Gellner, *Encounters with Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), p.200, and Gellner, *Nations*, p.55; Hobsbawm and Ranger (eds.), pp.3-15.

<sup>21</sup> Anthony Smith refers to authors within this ‘less modernist’ camp as ‘perennialists’. See Smith, *Origins*, p.4.

<sup>22</sup> Jacques Le Goff, for example, comments on the historians of the Western Middle Ages who set out to deliberately ‘reconstruct their past at a time when states and nations were ‘asserting themselves’ and a ‘taste for national history’ was becoming prominent. See Jacques Le Goff, *History and Memory* tr. Steven Rendall and Elizabeth Claman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), p.190. Susan Reynolds adopts the term ‘regnal’ sentiments to mitigate confusion between pre-modern collective identity and collective identity created through modern nationalism, but still argues that conception existed of peoples as a ‘community of custom, descent and government.’ See Susan Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe 900-1300* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), pp.253-256.

<sup>23</sup> See, for instance, Colette Beaune’s comprehensive work on the emergence of French identity, *Naissance de la nation France / The birth of an ideology: myths and symbols of nation in late-medieval France* tr. Susan Ross Huston; edited by Fredric L. Cheyette (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

<sup>24</sup> Llobera, p.27.

### *Myths of Identity*

Regardless of when in history nations are argued to have emerged, instrumentalists agree on the constructed nature of identity, and attribute significance to identity-myths in the conceptualization and dissemination of national identity. These myths of identity include stories, symbols, imagery or any other aspects of culture that contribute to, reflect, or even define the identity of a nation, in the *mentalité* sense of the French *Annales* school of history.<sup>25</sup>

In general, instrumentalists comment on myths of identity in the course of a broader inquiry into national identity or nationalism. There does, however, exist a body of work that takes such myths of identity as primary referents for analysis. Authors who have favoured this approach include Suzanne Citron, Colette Beaune, Raphael Samuel and Carlo Pirovano (ed.),<sup>26</sup> whose works focus on myths of identity in France, Britain and Italy respectively. Also of note are Hosking and Shopflin (eds.) and Heuser and Buffet (eds.), whose works illustrate the existence and role of myths of identity in different states.<sup>27</sup>

### *The Role of the State*

In addition to 'mythical constructs', some authors attribute significance to the emergence of the modern representative state in the development of national identity. The modern era, for example, is argued to have allowed new ties of citizenship to emerge

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<sup>25</sup> See, for instance, Cyril Buffet & Beatrice Heuser (eds.), *Haunted by History: Myths in International Relations* (Oxford: Bergham, 1998); Geoffrey Hosking & George Schöpflin (eds.), *Myths and Nationhood* (London: Hurst, 1997); Pim den Boer & Willem Frijhoff (eds.); Donald Phillip, *Symbol, Myth and Culture: Essays and Lectures of Ernst Cassirer* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1979).

<sup>26</sup> Beaune; Suzanne Citron, *Le Mythe National: L'Histoire de France en Question* (Paris: Éditions Ouvrières / Études et Documentation Internationales, 1991); Raphael Samuel (ed.), *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity* 3 Vols. (London; New York: Routledge, 1989); Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory* 2 Vols. (London: Verso 1994-1998); Carlo Pirovano (ed.), *Modern Italy: Images and History of a National Identity*, 5 Vols. (Milan: Electa, 1982-1986).

<sup>27</sup> Buffet & Heuser (eds.); Hosking & George Schöpflin (eds.); See also den Boer & Frijhoff (eds.)



between individuals and the state, forging a national identity born of representation and sentimental attachments.<sup>28</sup>

To complicate matters further, even authors who do not emphasize the modern era perceive a relationship between state- and nation-building. Anthony Smith, Llobera, and Reynolds, for instance, all acknowledge a role for medieval monarchs in promoting national consciousness through the extension of their authority and administrative apparatus.<sup>29</sup>

A lack of consensus is consequently evident, not only on *whether* national identity is constructed, but also on *how*.

## **Research Question II: What role has defence played in the construction of national identity?**

One influence on the construction of national identity that merits further inquiry is that of defence. The first observation that must be made concerning to the relationship between defence and identity is that few works are dedicated specifically to its study. This observation might lead the reader to remark that the concepts of warfare and contrast with ‘Others’ have not gone unnoticed in works on national identity. Yet while the concepts of warfare and ‘Others’ can, of course, carry defensive connotations, they are not *de facto* synonymous with *defence*. War can imply conquest and aggression, while contrasts with ‘Others’ do not always equate to threats to national survival. The concept of defence signifies the specific need to preserve the physical nation or the values the nation represents; as such, the overtones of sacrifice, morality and righteousness that defence carries are even more resonant than in other forms of warfare or cultural contrast. This distinction between war and defence is often taken for granted or not made explicit

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<sup>28</sup> See, for instance, John Stuart Mill Considerations on Representative Government (London: People’s Edition, Longmans, Green & Co., MDCCCLXVII), p.120; Hedetoft, Nations p.180.

in existing literature on national identity. Moreover, where references to the influence of defence on national identity do appear, they do so as part of a particular country study, or in relation to a much broader study into national identity; the impact of defence itself is rarely expanded on specifically.

The lack of distinction between warfare against ‘Others’ and defence is evident in literature on national identity. Ulf Hedetoft, for instance, has undertaken an extensive study on the impact of war on national mentality in which comments on war are interspersed with remarks on defence, as though there were little distinction to be made between the two.<sup>30</sup> Hedetoft is comfortable with describing wars and memories of war as ‘.... narratives about the *ultimate defence of “our sovereign existence”* ...[emphasis added]’ and defines defence and security as ‘.... nothing less than the ultimate touchstone of national sovereignty....’<sup>31</sup>, however, he still maintains *war* rather than *defence* as his primary term of reference.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, Hedetoft indicates the significance of ‘*foreign onslaughts*’ in strengthening Danish cultural identity, without questioning whether there might be some qualitative difference between the impact of war in general on identity, and the influence of defensive wars in particular.<sup>33</sup> In effect, the intermixing of references to war and defence, in the absence of any differentiation between the two, indicates that Hedetoft does not even accord defence the status of a sub-category of war.

Michael Howard also emphasizes the importance of ‘force’ to nations in terms of gaining and maintaining their ‘independence’, and even in determining which nations ‘survive’, without specifying that force in this context equates to *defence*.<sup>34</sup> Similarly,

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<sup>29</sup> See for instance, Smith, *National Identity*, p.60; Llobera, p.114; Reynolds, p.253.

<sup>30</sup> Ulf Hedetoft, ‘National Identity and Mentalities of War in Three EC Countries’ *Journal of Peace Research* 30 (2), (1993), p.281.

<sup>31</sup> Hedetoft, ‘Mentalities’, p.297.

<sup>32</sup> Hedetoft, ‘Mentalities’ p.282.

<sup>33</sup> Hedetoft, ‘Mentalities’, pp.292-293.

<sup>34</sup> Michael Howard, *The Lessons of History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp.39-40.



Anthony Smith, refers to war as providing ‘....myths and memories for future generations’,<sup>35</sup> while Ernest Renan writes of common sacrifices that bond people ‘in spite of diversities of race and language.’<sup>36</sup> Neither author, however, critically assesses whether *defensive* wars are more resonant in this regard. Likewise, much has been written on the impact of contrasts with ‘Others’ on collective identity.<sup>37</sup> However, neither war nor ‘Others’ are synonymous with defence, which implies at least a perception that the preservation of the physical nation, or the nation’s values, is at stake.

Furthermore, functions that belong to the domain of defence are often discussed in the context of identity with little or no reference to defence itself, masking the significance of the latter. For example, the propagation of national identity is attributed to the bureaucratizing and administrative functions of the *military*, but the military is not placed in its rightful context of defence.<sup>38</sup> Similarly, the significance of the monopoly of the means of violence as a mark of state-hood and national boundaries is perceived as relevant to the question of identity, but is not referred to in terms of a function of defence.<sup>39</sup>

Where specific references to defence to occur, they do not constitute fundamental studies on the relationship between defence and identity, but rather represent remarks on one aspect of identity among many others. Llobera, for example, comments on the how a common enemy can integrate groups for the purpose of defence, but does so as part of his

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<sup>35</sup> Smith, *National Identity*, p.27.

<sup>36</sup> Ernest Renan, ‘What is a Nation?’ in Ernest Renan, *Poetry of the Celtic Races and Other Studies* Translated by W. Hutchinson (London: Walter Scott, Ltd., 1896), p.81.

<sup>37</sup> See, for instance, Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven, CT.; London: Yale University Press, 1992); Linda Colley, ‘Britishness and Otherness: An Argument’ *Journal of British Studies* 31 (4) (October 1992), pp. 309-329; M. Hewstone and R.J. Brown (eds.), *Contact & Conflict in Intergroup Encounters* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986); Hedetoft, *Nations*.

<sup>38</sup> See, for instance, Anthony Smith, *Origins*, pp.350 and 352; Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p.3, p.132 and p.134.

<sup>39</sup> See, for instance, Anthony Giddens, *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism Vol. II: The Nation-State and Violence* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1985), pp.119-121 and Anthony Giddens *A*

far broader inquiry into nationalism.<sup>40</sup> Smith similarly refers to the ‘defensive’ nature of identity (albeit ethnic as opposed to national), which ‘appears’ or is reinforced in the context of internal and external threat, but defence itself is not Smith’s analytical point of departure.<sup>41</sup>

Ironically, defence in relation to identity has perhaps received the greatest emphasis in studies with a starting point diametrically opposed to that of this thesis; namely, works that seek to examine the impact of national identity and mentality *on* defence policy. David Chuter’s *Humanity’s Soldier*, Beatrice Heuser’s *Nuclear Mentalities* or Philip Gordon’s *A Certain idea of France*, for example, are less concerned with the primordialist versus instrumentalist debate, or with the impact of defence on national identity construction, than with providing an analysis of the impact of identity myths on defence, foreign policy or international relations.<sup>42</sup>

### **Research Question III: What role can defence play in the construction of European identity?**

What then, are the perceived prospects for the construction of European identity? Can European identity, in principle, be constructed, and if so, on what foundations? More specifically, what role might defence play in this process?

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Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism Vol. I: Power, Property, and the State (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1985), p.190.

<sup>40</sup> See Llobera, pp. 8-17.

<sup>41</sup> Smith, *Origins*, pp.55-56. See also Colley, who emphasizes the role of internal and external enemies in the ‘forging’ of British identity, but does not undertake a specific, theoretical analysis of the impact of *defence* on national identity. See also Beaune, whose comprehensive work on French identity in the late Middle Ages accentuates the impact of conflict with the English. Neither work draws broader conclusions on the influence of defence on national identity.

<sup>42</sup> David Chuter, *Humanity’s Soldier*; Beatrice Heuser, *Nuclear Mentalities? Strategies and Beliefs in Britain, France and the FRG* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd.; New York: St. Martin’s Press, Inc., 1998); Philip Gordon, *A Certain Idea of France: French Security Policy and the Gaullist Legacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).



*Can national identity be transcended?*

The first question to address is whether European identity can, in principle, be constructed. Given that primordialists perceive nations and national identity to be inherent, one might expect instrumentalists to be more open to the possibility of a constructed European identity. Yet while some instrumentalists allow for the transcendence of national identity *in principle*, they are rarely optimistic, or even specific, about the construction of European identity in practice.<sup>43</sup>

Gellner, for example, notes that ‘national’ cultures are not immutable, although his remark that pluralism will be the only alternative to a world of ethnic cleansing does not reveal any great confidence in the triumph of the former.<sup>44</sup> Similarly, Elie Kedourie remarks that there is nothing to prove that mankind is naturally divided into nations, but says little about how to overcome the artificial divide imposed by nationalism.<sup>45</sup>

Liah Greenfeld’s outlook is somewhat more positive. Greenfeld argues that the interests served by national identity, including an association between the individual and strength and greatness, could also be served by *other* types of identity, and that as the interests and circumstances that spurred the rise of national identities change, national identities too may alter.<sup>46</sup> For Greenfeld, nationalism is not a specifically *national* process; rather, nationalism imbues certain aspects and attributes with meaning in the context of collective identity, a function it could also perform on a transnational scale, to the point where humanity, holding popular sovereignty could in principle constitute a

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<sup>43</sup> The authors discussed might not necessarily define themselves as instrumentalists, but the distinction is made here to facilitate separation between authors who are fundamentally primordialist, and those who concede the notion of constructed identity.

<sup>44</sup> Gellner, *Nationalism*, p.108.

<sup>45</sup> Kedourie, p.9.

<sup>46</sup> Greenfeld, p.490.

nation.<sup>47</sup> Greenfeld, however, does not comment specifically on the prospects for European identity.

Smith also concedes that nations are not 'static', even once they are formed.<sup>48</sup> However, given the significance Smith attaches to pre-existing ethnic cores in the emergence of national identity it is unsurprising that Smith believes the absence of a European ethnic core with its own 'common historical memories, myths, symbols and values [constructed or otherwise]....' presents an obstacle to the creation of a genuine and resonant European identity.<sup>49</sup>

### ***Globalization and Integration***

Globalization and integration also impact upon authors' perception of the prospects for transcending national identity. Eric Hobsbawm, for example, comments that the globalization being stimulated by the growth in intergovernmental and non-governmental institutions is gradually depriving the nation of one of its defining roles as a '....constituting territorially bounded national economy.'<sup>50</sup> For Hobsbawm, the nation is no longer an adequate expression in the modern age, and as the utility of the nation-state declines, so may the issue of nationality. If this is the case, then perhaps transnational institutions and economies will herald transnational identities; nonetheless, Hobsbawm says, it would be 'absurd' to say that this time is already at hand.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Greenfeld, pp.7-8.

<sup>48</sup> Smith *Origins*, p.212

<sup>49</sup> Smith 'A Europe of Nations' p.134; See also Smith, *Origin*, p.212.

<sup>50</sup> Hobsbawm *Nations and Nationalism since 1790: Programme, Myth, Reality* Canto Second Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p.181.

<sup>51</sup> Hobsbawm *Nations and Nationalism*, p.192. For additional arguments on the impact of globalization, see, for instance, Cesare Merlini 'Global Interdependence and the Case of Europe' *The International Spectator* Volume XXXIII (1) (Jan-March, 1998), pp.53-65; Carlo Jean 'The Role of the Nation State in Providing Security in a Changed World' *The International Spectator* Volume XXXIII (1) (Jan-March, 1998), pp. 57-77.



### *Globalization and Polyethnicity*

An alternative proposition, however, is that while globalization may be eroding the nation-state it is doing so in favour of identities at a *sub-national*, rather than *supranational*, level.<sup>52</sup> Perhaps the most well known perspective on national fragmentation is that of William McNeill, who argues that polyethnicity, rather than national unity, is the norm in history.<sup>53</sup> For McNeill, the globalization of communications in the modern era is one aspect that makes a return to this norm likely. McNeill cites the example of modern immigrants who, instead of being culturally assimilated into their state of residence, take advantage of the ease of communication with home, and so preserve their 'ethnic' cultural identities.<sup>54</sup> This argument is echoed by Anthony Richmond, among others, who states that 'interpersonal' communication networks will allow an ever greater closeness to 'kin', further reducing the size of the 'overarching unit' of individual loyalty.'<sup>55</sup>

### *Globalization and the Reassertion of the Nation State*

An additional, and contrasting, current of thought argues that globalization and integration are not heralding the decline of the nation-state in favour of sub- or supra-national identity, but rather have contributed to the *regeneration* of the concept of the nation-state.<sup>56</sup> Paul Taylor, for instance, contends that when international arrangements

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<sup>52</sup> Peter Schlesinger 'From Cultural Defence to Political Culture: Media, Politics and Collective Identity in the European Union' *Media, Culture & Society* Vol.19 (1997), p.370; Anthony Richmond 'Ethnic Nationalism and Post-Industrialism' *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 7 (1) (1984), pp.4-18;

<sup>53</sup> William McNeill *Polyethnicity and National Unity in World History: The Donald G. Creighton Lectures 1985* (Toronto; Buffalo; London: University of Toronto Press, 1985).

<sup>54</sup> McNeill, p.77

<sup>55</sup> Anthony Richmond, 'The Suppression of Nationalism?' *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, 1-2 (31), p.13; Anthony Richmond, 'Ethnic Nationalism.' See also Benedict Anderson 'The New World Disorder' *New Left Review* 193 (May-June, 1992), pp.3-14; Anthony Smith 'A Europe of Nations', p.132.

<sup>56</sup> See, for instance, Chris Shore 'Transcending the Nation-State?' p.491; Ole Wæver and Morten Kelstrup, 'Europe and Its Nations' in Ole Wæver, Barry Buzan, Morten Kelstrup and Pierre Lemaitre, *Identity, Migration and the New Security Agenda in Europe* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), pp.61-92; Stephen Wood *Germany, Europe and the Persistence of Nations: Transformation, Interests and Identity, 1989-1996* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992); Alan Milward (with George Brennon and Frederico Romero) *The European Rescue of the Nation-State* (London: Routledge, 1992).



like European integration are seen to excessively threaten national sovereignty, they may actually prompt a renewed emphasis on national identity.<sup>57</sup>

Indeed, some view the state as *always* having been predominant in the process of European integration, arguing that state interests, not a sense of European identity, have been the driving factors; in other words, European integration has only ever been pursued when, and because, it served the purposes of the nation-state.<sup>58</sup> This point is made most vehemently by Paul Rich, who questions the degree to which a European cultural identity exists, arguing that throughout history, state-*realpolitik*, not common identity, has been the guiding influence on European states.<sup>59</sup> The point is made less forcefully in a study on the diplomatic history of Europe edited by René Girault and Gérard Bossuat, who illustrate the various interests of France, Britain the United States and Austro-Hungary in promoting European integration.<sup>60</sup> In addition there are, of course, a multitude of works outlining the development of European integration, either from an institutional or general standpoint,<sup>61</sup> or from the perspectives of various member states,<sup>62</sup> but the question of the origins or construction of European identity does not constitute a central theme.

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<sup>57</sup> Paul Taylor, International Organization in the Modern World: The Regional and Global Process (London: Pinter, 1993). See also Schlesinger 'Cultural Defence', p.370.

<sup>58</sup> See, for instance Milward, European Rescue.

<sup>59</sup> Paul Rich, 'European Identity and the Myth of Islam: A Reassessment' *Review of International Studies* (1999) 25, pp.435-451. See also Alan S. Milward, Frances M.B. Lynch, Frederico Romero, Ruggero Ranieri and Vibeke Sørensen, The Frontier of National Sovereignty: History and Theory, 1945-1992 (London: Routledge, 1993).

<sup>60</sup> René Girault and Gérard Bossuat (eds.), Europe Brisée, Europe Retrouvée. Nouvelles Réflexions sur l'Unité Européenne au XXe Siècle (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1994).

<sup>61</sup> See, for instance, Derek Unwin, The Community of Europe: A History of European International Relations (London, Longman, 1991); Keith Middlemas, Orchestrating Europe: The Informal Politics of the European Union, 1973-95 (London: Fontana Press, 1995); Anne Deighton (ed.), Building Post-war Europe: National Decision-Makers and European Institutions, 1948-63 (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press in Association with St. Antony's College Oxford, 1995); Richard Allister, From EC to EU, an Historical and Political Survey; (London; New York: Routledge, 1997).

<sup>62</sup> See, for instance, John W. Young, Britain and European Unity 1945-1992 (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992); W. Kaiser, Using Europe, Abusing the Europeans: Britain and European Integration, 1945-63 (Basingstoke: Macmillan; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996); M. Dassu and A. Missiroli 'L'Italia in Europa: I Primi Quarant' Anni' *Quaderni di Sociologia* XL, 12 (1996); A. Varsori (ed.), La Politica Estera Italiana nel Secondo Dopoguerra 1943-1957 (Milan: LED, 1993); Sue Ellen M. Charlton, The French Left and European Integration (Denver: University of Denver, 1972).



Even theoretically, the question of whether national identity can be transcended is uncertain; more so is whether it can be transcended by a *European* identity. Indeed, many of the authors discussed above only allude to this question as part of a broader study on national identity, sometimes just in the context of a closing chapter or section on the prospects for national identity in the future. None of these works, moreover, seeks to draw an analytical comparison between the origins and process of national and European identity construction.

### *Foundations of European Identity*

A number of scholars, however, have sought to identify either the roots of European identity or the foundations upon which such an identity might be constructed. Broadly speaking, authors tend to focus on three main areas: common culture and heritage; civic ties; and the relationship between national and European myths of European identity.

### *Cultural Convergence*

For some scholars, the question of common culture and heritage is at the heart of the European identity question. One approach to common culture examines this question more or less empirically, through the study of the convergence between national European cultures, including similarities in preferences and habits.<sup>63</sup> For instance, the social historian Hartmut Kaelble, and the political scientist and think tankers Helen and William Wallace have examined economic and societal indicators in European states,

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<sup>63</sup> See, for instance, Michael Wintle (ed.), *Culture and Identity in Europe: Perceptions of Divergence and Unity in Past and Present* (Aldershot; Brookfield: Avebury, 1996); N.A. Sørensen, *European Identities: Cultural Diversity and Integration in Europe since 1700* (Odense: Odense University Press, 1995); S. Zetterholm, *National Cultures and European Integration: Exploratory Essays on Cultural Diversity and Common Policies* (Oxford; Providence: Berg, 1994); Victoria A. Goddard, Josef R. Llobera and Chris Shore (eds.), *The Anthropology of Europe: Identities and Boundaries in Conflict* (Oxford; Providence: Berg, 1994); Maija Mäkilä, Anu Korhonen, Keijo Virtanen (eds.), *European Identities: Suites on Integration, Identity and Nationhood* (Turun Yliopisto: UNIPAPS, 1997).



arguing that some similarities are emerging in the economic and societal features of many European countries.<sup>64</sup>

### *Common Heritage*

Another approach focusing on culture takes European identity as a given, and is consequently more concerned with illustrating the aspects and origins of this identity than with empirically proving or denying its existence. This approach argues that Europe's identity is based on a common heritage that has developed through the ages, and needs only to be realized in the public imagination. In this sense, such scholars may almost be termed European primordialists, yet much like primordialists in the national identity sphere, advocates often resort to very *instrumentalist* means to bring a supposedly *primordial* identity to life.<sup>65</sup>

With little critical analysis or variation, such works illustrate an inherent 'idea' of Europe existing through history, such as biblical mythologies of the European continent, the influence of Greece and Rome in Antiquity, Europe's Judeo-Christian heritage, and the impact of military and cultural confrontation with Islam and European civilization. Recurring themes also include the decline of the notion of the West, the crisis of European values of the Twentieth Century, and moves toward European integration in the modern era.

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<sup>64</sup>See, for instance, Harmut Kaelble, *Nationalismus, Nationalitäten, Supranationalität* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1993); Jacques Pelkmans and L. Alan Winters, with Helen Wallace, *Europe's Domestic Market* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs; New York: Routledge, 1988); Helen Wallace & William Wallace *Flying Together in a Larger and more Diverse European Union* (The Hague: Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy, 1995).

<sup>65</sup> Works within this approach include A. Compagnon and J. Seebacher (eds.) *L'Esprit de l'Europe* 3 vols. (Paris: Flammarion, 1993); L. Couloubratis (ed.), *The Origins of European Identity* (Brussels: European Interuniversity Press, 1993); Denis de Rougement *The Idea of Europe* tr. Norbert Guterman (New York: Macmillan, 1966); Charles-Olivier Carbonell (ed.) *De l'Europe: Identités et Identité, Mémoires et Mémoire* (Toulouse: Presses de l'Université des sciences sociales de Toulouse, 1996). For a concise critique of the European 'Grand Narrative' embodied in these approaches, see Gerard Delanty 'The Limits and Possibilities of a European Identity: A critique of Cultural Essentialism' *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 21 (4), pp.15-36.



Broadly speaking these works also trace the ‘great thoughts’ that have helped to shape the European idea, including those of Dante, Petrarch, Montesquieu, Voltaire, Rousseau and Mazzini. Such works also generally include an overview of the various historical plans for European integration, ranging from those born in the context of medieval Christian conflicts with the Turks, to the modern day European project born in the wake of World War Two. Within this approach, the question of whether a common European identity will ever have popular resonance is secondary to the illustration of its roots; European identity *exists*, regardless of whether or not it is generally perceived.

Other studies are less historically focused, but are still essentially *instrumentalist* in nature, exploring means through which European identity could be disseminated, for instance through the promotion of European media or European cultural events designed to increase awareness of Europe and of *being* European.<sup>66</sup>

Less deliberately instrumentalist works on European heritage also trace various histories of the idea of Europe, but can suffer from a lack of in depth analysis, being primarily illustrations of European historiography and conceptions of Europe over the ages.<sup>67</sup>

However, while some argue that European identity will spring from the dissemination of a cultural and historical conceptualization of Europe, critics are skeptical

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<sup>66</sup> Such works included academic publications like that of Robert Picht (ed.), L’Identité Européenne. Analyses et Propositions Pour le Renforcement d’une Europe Pluralist (Brussels: Presses Interuniversitaires Européennes, 1994), as well as official EC documents on, for instance, the promotion of European media and culture. For examples of the latter, see European Community Action in Support of Culture (Brussels: CEC, 1994); The European Community and Culture (Brussels: CEC, 1985). An excellent overview of institutional Europe’s attempts to construct a European cultural identity is presented in Chris Shore, ‘Transcending the Nation-State? The European Commission and the (Re)-Discovery of Europe’ *Journal of Historical Sociology* 19 (4) (December, 1996), pp473-495.

<sup>67</sup> See, for instance, Karl Leyser, ‘Concepts of Europe in the Early and High Middle Ages’ *Past & Present* 137 (November, 1992), pp.25-48; Denis Heater, The Idea of European Unity (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1992); Denis Hay, Europe: The Emergence of an Idea Second Edition (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1968); Richard Hoggart and Douglas Johnson, An Idea of Europe (London: Chatoo & Windus, 1987); J.B. Duroselle, L’Idée d’Europe dans l’Histoire (Paris: Editions Denoël, 1965); Elisabeth du Réau, L’Idée d’Europe au XX Siècle: Des Mythes Aux Réalités (Brussels: Complexe, 1993); Kevin



about the validity of European identity, on the basis that it is an artificial construct.<sup>68</sup>

Even authors who do not necessarily deny that some bases for European identity may exist point out that a common perception of Europe and a shared European identity are still confined to elites and have not been assimilated by the European public at large.<sup>69</sup>

Smith, for instance, argues that if the nation-state can be transcended, it will be on the basis of common 'patterns' of European culture and traditions in law, philosophy and science that are to some extent shared by European states, and that to some degree have created a 'European family of cultures.'<sup>70</sup> Yet Smith also questions how effective this cultural basis will be in creating a genuinely European identity, given that these European cultural traditions have in essence been utilized and 'adapted' to suit the purposes of individual European Union states.<sup>71</sup> For Smith, myths of European identity founded on the 'golden age' of Christendom are either illegitimate, because of the legacy of imperialism, irrelevant because Europe has become too secular, or unusable because they lack a common meaning and resonance across Europe's varied and modern states.<sup>72</sup> Yet according to Smith, a European identity based solely on economic interest is equally unlikely to take root.<sup>73</sup> In this interpretation, prospects for a European identity appear somewhat grim.

Furthermore, the continued presence of state elites, national education systems, linguistic and historical barriers to transnational media are argued to be hindering the dissemination of the 'European message', and doubts are raised as to whether Europeans themselves will ever be willing to *accept* such messages or feel inspired by them to a

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Wilson and Jan van der Dussen (eds.); Francesca Pozzoli (ed.), "Europa la Più Nobile, Europa la Più Bella." Idee e Ideali dell'Europa dalle Origini ai Giorni Nostri (Milano: Saggi Tascabili, 1999).

<sup>68</sup> See, for instance, Hedetoft *Nations*.

<sup>69</sup> See, for example, Remo Bodei 'Historical Memory and European Identity' *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 21(4) (1995), p.1.

<sup>70</sup> Smith 'A Europe of Nations', p.132.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*



sense of common identity.<sup>74</sup> It is claimed that institutional Europe has failed to engender a sense of loyalty and enthusiasm for European identity, and has based attempts to create such an identity on top-down, western conceptions of culture that discriminate against those of 'non-European origin'.<sup>75</sup>

Some scholars therefore question the utility of culture as a basis for European identity, and are fearful that such an identity would result in the emphasis of a predominantly western narrative of culture that would discriminate against cultural and religious minorities. Indeed, there is an argument that part of Europe's identity is formed on the notion of diversity, and that attempts to promote identity through, for example, a uniform European culture would automatically be counterproductive.<sup>76</sup>

### *Civic Ties*

This leads some authors to seek the roots of European identity in pluralism, citizenship and political representation.<sup>77</sup> Gerard Delanty, for instance, refutes the notion of a European identity based on essentially discriminatory myths of superior civilization, and common values of democracy, freedom and the cultural roots of Latin Christendom. For Delanty, any European identity must instead be pursued on the bases of cultural pluralism and post-national citizenship, linked to participation in Europe's new institutions.<sup>78</sup> Similarly, Sonja Puntsher Riekmann argues that any 'European' myths

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<sup>72</sup> Smith 'A Europe of Nations', p.134.

<sup>73</sup> Smith 'European Unity', p.74.

<sup>74</sup> For an interpretation of this argument see Smith 'European Unity', pp.72-73.

<sup>75</sup> See Shore, 'Transcending the Nation-State?', p.487.

<sup>76</sup> For an expansion of this argument, see Wood, p.66.

<sup>77</sup> See for instance, Sardar, *European Identity*, pp.x-xi; Schleisinger, 'Cultural Defence', p.387-388. For a comprehensive overview of European democratic thought, see Alain-Marc Rieu and Gérard Duprat (eds.), *European Democratic Culture* (London; New York: 1993).

<sup>78</sup> See Gerard Delanty, *Inventing Europe*, pp.156-163; Gerard Delanty 'The Limits and Possibilities of a European Identity: A Critique of Cultural Essentialism' *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 21 (4) (1995), pp.15-36.



need to be founded on genuine democracy and representation, and on a European constitution based on a bill of rights.<sup>79</sup>

This argument holds that as European institutions develop, and citizens' rights become increasingly transposed to the European level, so will individuals' loyalty be increasingly transferred to the European, as opposed to principally national, level. In other words, if popular sovereignty and representation come to rest with Europe rather than the nation-state, European identity will follow.<sup>80</sup>

For some, the institutional dimension of Europe is enabling the European Union to be perceived as an international actor, with an international identity.<sup>81</sup> In this sense, Europe, or at least institutional Europe, has a *de facto* identity because its networks of institutional and legal arrangements enable to perform as a distinct actor on the world stage, with a separate identity from that of its constituent nations, although it has not asserted itself as a nation-state.<sup>82</sup>

Ironically, however, works that do focus on citizenship and representation as bases of identity tend to contribute to the very identification of *Europe* with the *Western* Europe that is so criticized, as Europe's political institutions remain the domain of the essentially western European Union. Moreover, in reducing Europe to the *institutional*

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<sup>79</sup> Sonja Puntsher Riekmann, 'The Myth of European Unity' in Geoffrey Hosking and Gerooge Shöpflin (eds.), *Myths and Nationhood* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p.70.

<sup>80</sup> See, for instance, Paul Howe, 'A Community of Europeans: The Requisite Underpinnings' *Journal of Common Market Studies* 33 (1), 1996, pp.28-46; Andrea Manzella, 'After Amsterdam, the Constitutional Identity of the European Union' *The International Spectator*, Vol. XXXIII (1) (Jan-March, 1998), pp.37-51.

<sup>81</sup> Richard Whitman, *From Civilian Power to Superpower? The International Identity of the European Union* (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1998). See also Edelgard Mahant, 'Foreign Policy and European Identity' *History of European Ideas* 21 (4) (1995), pp.485-498. Mahant examines the extent to which Europeans identify with Europe as a foreign policy actor, concluding that in the mid 1990s, Europeans had begun to perceive a European identity in the practice of European Community foreign policy.

<sup>82</sup> Whitman, *Superpower*, p.233. It should be noted that Whitman nonetheless concedes that the European Union has not always acted effectively on the international stage, most notably in the crisis in Yugoslavia. See Whitman, *Superpower*, p.241.



plane, authors adopt a narrow perspective that fails to take into consideration the cultural dimensions of identity.

Furthermore, critics of this approach question the degree to which European institutions will be able to gain the legitimacy necessary to engender a genuine attachment from European citizens. For some, legitimacy is not a question of political representation or accountability, but depends upon genuine and pre-existing resonance and sentiment among the population. Citizenship, in other words, cannot be separated from the dimensions of history and identity.<sup>83</sup> At the national level, political legitimacy is sustained by ‘myths’ of identity that collocate the state at the heart of the nation and underline its place as the only rightful representative of *its* people. The question then becomes whether such myths can be created and sustained at the European level.

### *Myths of National and European Identity*

Certain authors have addressed this question through a comparative, ‘bottom-up’ examination of national myths of identity, in the sense of the French *Annales* school of historiography and mentality.<sup>84</sup> One such study is Marco Goffredo Cinnirella’s doctoral thesis on national and European identity construction in the United Kingdom and Italy.<sup>85</sup> Cinnirella is concerned with manifestations of national and European identity among British and Italian citizens, and with the impact of European integration on national identity in these countries.

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<sup>83</sup> See, for instance, Gian Enrico Rusconi, ‘The Difficulty in Building a European Identity’ *The International Spectator* Volume XXXIII (1) (Jan-March, 1998), pp.23-36.

<sup>84</sup> For an introduction to the Annales school of history, see Stuart Clark (ed.), *The Annales School* (New York: Routledge, 1999); Peter Burke *The French Historical Revolution: the Annales school, 1929-89* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1990).

<sup>85</sup> Marco Goffredo Cinnirella, *Social Identity Perspectives on European Integration: a Comparative Study of National and European Identity Construction in Britain and Italy* (Ph.D. Doctoral Thesis, London School of Economics and Political Science; University of London, 1993).



Rooted in social psychology, and drawing on a previous study by Miles Hewstone,<sup>86</sup> Cinnirella examines 'social representations' of the nation and Europe in the United Kingdom and Italy, focusing on a qualitative and quantitative analysis of individuals' perceptions. Cinnirella concludes that individuals' attitudes to nationality and European identity are motivated by a desire for association with control and power, and that such motivations are reflected in the preferences individuals show for certain symbols over others.<sup>87</sup> Perhaps unsurprisingly, Cinnirella's findings indicate that a sense of European identity is more profound in Italy, where pride in the state is weak, than in the United Kingdom, where pride in the state is stronger. In any case, Cinnirella's research suggests that European identity is at best secondary to national identity.

Similarly, Ulf Hedetoft examines myths and symbols of nations and assesses the prospects for the development of *European* symbols and identity, primarily on the basis of qualitative surveys of public opinion.<sup>88</sup> Hedetoft analyses national identity theoretically, but also undertakes case studies of national mentality in Germany, the United Kingdom and Denmark, concluding that while symbolism is an important element of national mentality, Europe's body of symbolism is strained and artificial, and suffers from a lack of resonance among Europeans.<sup>89</sup>

For Hedetoft, Europe's symbols seek to create identity, whereas among nations they reflect it. Hedetoft concludes that Europe lacks the foundation for a genuine identity

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<sup>86</sup> See Miles Hewstone, Understanding Attitudes to the European Community: A Social-Psychological Study in Four Member States (Cambridge; New York; Melbourne: Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge; Paris: Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1986).

<sup>87</sup> Cinnirella, Social Identity, p.347.

<sup>88</sup> Hedetoft, Nations; Hedetoft (ed.), Political Symbols, Symbolic Politics: European Identities in Transformation (Aldershot, England; Brookfield, Vt: Ashgate, 1998).

<sup>89</sup> Hedetoft, Nations p.125.

and that the ‘imperative voluntarist will’ to create such an identity exists only at the very elite level.<sup>90</sup>

This conclusion is echoed by Chris Shore, who argues that ‘...to be effective, EC flags, anthems, trophies and institutions must be meaningful, and that means they should come after, not before, political legitimacy has been established and accepted by the peoples of Europe.’<sup>91</sup>

Similarly, Smith notes that there are no European equivalents to Bastille day, or European rituals to equal those played out in the national sphere.<sup>92</sup> More forcefully, Gerard Delanty describes European elite attempts to ‘create’ a European cultural identity as ‘pathetic exercises in cultural engineering’.<sup>93</sup>

This leads one to ask, however, where national symbolism originally sprang from, and how national commemorations gained their resonance? Unless one adopts the primordialist argument that national identity is inherent, one is compelled to address *why* European myths and symbolism should *de facto* be doomed to irrelevance and artificiality.

Moreover, neither Cinnirella nor Hedetoft, adequately investigate the *origins* of the attitudes held by their interview and questionnaire respondents, and both suffer from a resulting lack of historical perspective. Cinnirella himself states that while attitudes are a significant dimension of belief systems and behaviour, their origins are equally important, and that the latter have received little attention in academic studies.<sup>94</sup> Identifying attitudes and salient symbolism, in other words, neither explains their origin, nor sheds light on the likelihood of their being replicated at a supra-national level.

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<sup>90</sup> Hedetoft, *Nations* p.50.

<sup>91</sup> Shore, ‘Transcending the Nation-State’, p.490.

<sup>92</sup> Smith, ‘European Unity’, p.73.

<sup>93</sup> Delanty, ‘*Inventing Europe*’, p.128.

<sup>94</sup> Cinnirella, *Social Identity*, pp.347-348.



Consequently, Hedetoft's and Cinnirella's studies, while offering valuable insights into mass perspectives on national and European identity, ultimately investigate *reflections* of identity, and not necessarily its origins. Hedetoft is particularly flawed in this regard; his failure to adequately address the historical origins of national identity undermines his implicit conclusion that national symbolism and identity are inherently more genuine than the symbolism and identity being promoted at the European level. For example, the question of a lack of a generalized 'voluntarist will' for European identity is not an adequate justification for pessimism; one of the principal foundations of Italian identity was the principle of voluntarism held by a very select elite.<sup>95</sup>

### *Defence and European Identity*

If, in principle, national identity can be transcended, what role might defence play in the construction of European identity?

### *The Imperatives of European Defence*

As with national identity, analytical distinctions between war, 'Others' and defence are rarely made in relation to European identity. For example, one study by Jon Davies examines the role of war symbolism in delineating Europe's boundaries, and in defining European identity itself.<sup>96</sup> Davies emphasizes that the most commonly recognized symbols in Europe are the Cross and the numbers '1914-18' and that '[w]here incomprehension of these symbols begins Europe ends.'<sup>97</sup> Europe's experiences of war are thus '..... transfigured via a common memory into a shared identity.'<sup>98</sup> Davies' central theme, however, is war, not defence. Similarly, Hans Kahn, Iver Neumann and Jennifer Welsh all emphasize the impact of 'Others' in European identity formation, but

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<sup>95</sup> See, for instance, 'Freedom' in Chapter Eight of this thesis, pp.260-262.

<sup>96</sup> Jon Davies, 'Reconstructing Enmities; War and War Memorials, the Boundary Markers of the West' *History of European Ideas* 19 (1-3) (1994), pp.47-52.

<sup>97</sup> Davies, 'Reconstructing Enmities' p.48.

<sup>98</sup> Davies, 'Reconstructing Enmities,' p.52.



references to defence are rarely deliberately and analytically differentiated from references to cultural contrasts or warfare; the impact of the 'Other' rather than of defence, constitutes the primary focus of analysis.<sup>99</sup>

Interestingly, there are a number of works on the origins of the idea of Europe that illustrate the impact of defence on the construction of European identity even though defence is not the primary object of analysis. For example, numerous works on the origins of the idea of Europe comment on the impact of the Battle of Poitiers (732), in which Christians mounted a successful defence against invading Turks, in spurring possibly one of the earliest surviving references to the term 'Europeans.'<sup>100</sup> Similarly, Denis Hay argues that from the mid Seventh Century to the Tenth Century, the success of Muslim attacks and '....the danger of engulfment ... made Christians in the West [albeit not specifically Europeans] forget minor differences....'<sup>101</sup> Interestingly, Hay also writes that the Muslim Turkish threat prompted efforts to create a myth of common origins for Germany and France that implied ethnic, not just religious, bonds; an identity from which the Turks were excluded. Hay recounts how in the late Fifteenth Century, France and Germany's myths of Trojan descent, created to bolster national prestige, were used to demonstrate France and Germany's common origins, in order to appeal to their respective armies to unite to liberate their common heritage from the occupying Turks.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Iver B. Neumann & Jennifer M. Welsh, 'The Other in European Self-Definition: an Addendum to the literature on International Society' *Review of International Studies*, vol.17 (1991), pp.327-348. See also M.E. Yap, 'Europe in the Turkish Mirror' *Past & Present* 137 (November, 1992), pp.134-155. For additional works on the 'Other' in European identity formation, see Delanty *Europe*, particularly pp. 23-24, p.58, p.89, pp.92-99 and p.115; Hekki Mikkeli, *Europe as an Idea and an Identity* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998); Ziauddin Sardar's analysis of 'internal Others' and European identity in Z. Sardar, 'European Muslims and European Identity' *European Business Review* 99 (3) 1999, pp.iv-xi; Jennifer M. Welsh, 'The Inner Enemy in European Self-definition' *History of European Ideas* 19 (1-3), pp.53-61; <sup>99</sup> Vilo Harle, 'On the Concepts of the "Other" and the "Enemy"' *History of European Ideas* 19 (1-3), pp.27-34; Philip Schlesinger 'Cultural Defence', p.369; Smith 'European Unity', pp.75-76.

<sup>100</sup> For a copy of the original text in which the term appeared, see Isidoro il Giovane o Pacensis 'Chronicon (769) in Pozzoli (ed.), p.28. For references to the significance of the text see, for instance, de Rougement, p.45; Carbonnel (ed.), p.21; Hay, p.25, and p.110-111.

<sup>101</sup> Hay, p.24.

<sup>102</sup> Hay, pp.109-109.



Remo Bodei also remarks on the origin of 'Europe' as a 'myth' based on self-identification in relation to external aggression. Bodei cites the Greek battles against the Persian Empire (490-48 BC) as giving birth to an idea of Europe that was then able to associate itself with the values of freedom, reason and law, reinforced centuries later by the victories of Charles Martel over the Arabs (732 AD) and the Turkish siege of Vienna (1683). For Bodei, 'Europe's spiritually undivided solidarity...is to the forefront when it combats a powerful enemy, barbarian or infidel, that represents its supposed negation incarnate.'<sup>103</sup>

Karl Leyser comments that the threat of the Vikings 'crystallized' the idea of Europe as a '....a continent threatened and on the defensive....' and associated it with certain values like civilization that needed to be defended.<sup>104</sup> Similarly, Victor Harle writes that '....the basis of the European identity is mainly related to the "Enemy", which has threatened Europe and against which Europe has fought.'<sup>105</sup> More recently, the Soviet threat has been seen to impact upon collective identities in Europe.<sup>106</sup>

In addition to these secondary sources, which allude to the influence of defence without making defence a primary object of analysis, a number of primary documents suggest the impact of defence on European identity. After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, for instance, Pope Pius II expressed his consternation at the presence of Muslims in the European 'homeland.'<sup>107</sup> The need to defend against the Turkish threat prompted a series of plans to unify Europe, including a plan based on a secular Europe of States

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<sup>103</sup> Remo Bodei, 'Historical Memory', pp. 2-3. See also Kevin Wilson & Jan van der Dussen (eds.), pp.16-17.

<sup>104</sup> Leyser, pp.41-43.

<sup>105</sup> Harle, p.31.

<sup>106</sup> See, for instance, Heuser, 'European Strategists', pp.61-62; Vladislav Zubok, 'The Soviet Union and European Integration from Stalin to Gorbachev' *Journal of European Integration History* 2 (1) (1996), pp.85-98.

<sup>107</sup> Enea Silvio Piccolomini, Pope Pius II 'Oratio de Constantinopolitana Clade, et Bello Contra Turcos Congregando (1458)' in Pozzoli (ed.), p.40.

(which illustrates a sense of European, as well as Christian, identity).<sup>108</sup> Defence thus provided not only the context for a sense of European commonality and shared interests in contrast to the Muslim Turks, but also the imperative for Europe's states to unify and cease warring against one another, lest Europe as a whole be rendered more vulnerable to the Turkish threat; in this sense too, the destructiveness of Europe's wars as a factor prompting integration was accompanied by the practical requirements of defence against a common threat.<sup>109</sup> Again, however, remarks on the impact of defence are scattered in existing literature.

Philip Schlesinger posits the question of defence in cultural, rather than military, terms. Schlesinger illustrates how, during the GATT negotiations of 1993, the perceived threat of cultural dominance by the United States helped diverse national cultures to appear European, and mobilized a more unified European position at the GATT negotiations.<sup>110</sup>

Ironically, while these works serve to illustrate the impact of defence on the construction of identity, defence itself does not constitute a central theme. Moreover, references to defence are scattered across the literature, and no single work sets out to provide a broader understanding of the impact of defence on European identity.

### *The Imperatives of National Defence*

Elsewhere, references are made to the impact of states' defensive requirements through history in bolstering European integration, but again, defence is not the subject of

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<sup>108</sup> See Pozzoli (ed.), p.41.

<sup>109</sup> For examples of historical documents see Juan Luis Vives, 'De Europae Dissidiis et Bello Turcico Dialogus (1526)' reproduced in Pozzoli (ed.), p.48 and Pierre Dubois 'De Recuperatione Terrae Sanctae (1305)' reproduced in Pozzoli (ed.), p.30. See also Erasmus' treatise on the need for peace, *Querela Pacis* (1517) discussed in Heikki Mikkeli, p.45 and Rousseau's perspective on federations as a means of gaining security from threats in Mikkeli, p.81.

<sup>110</sup> See Schlesinger, 'Cultural Defence', pp.369-391.



a distinct analytical investigation into European identity.<sup>111</sup> The question of defence and European identity receives more specific attention in relation to whether national interests are too divergent for a European defence identity to be constructed.<sup>112</sup> Some authors argue that states are not yet willing to give up the national monopoly, and the valuable symbolism, of national defence, and that this will limit the prospects for a European security and defence identity.<sup>113</sup> Yet such remarks in essence serve to highlight the very significance of defence, not just of war and 'Others', to national *and* European identity.

One study has sought to examine the existence of European identity on the bases of the convergence or otherwise of European sentiment among officers in European armies.<sup>114</sup> Interestingly, while the study concluded that there was no basis on which to declare the existence of a common European identity among the officers surveyed, researchers found that the longer an officer had been in the military, the more likely he or she was to look favourably on both the desirability and prospects for European integration.<sup>115</sup> However, no broader conclusions were drawn by the study on the extent to which European defence might consequently enhance the prospects for a European identity. Indeed, while such studies generally conclude that there is insufficient European identity for a European security and defence identity to be created, they do not ask whether the extent to which integration in defence, even if symbolic, might contribute to

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<sup>111</sup> See, for instance, Luigi Einaudi, *La Guerra e l'Unità Europea* (Bologna: Mulino, 1986); While not specifically addressing European identity, a similar argument concerning the impact of defence requirements on integration is made by Anthony Richmond, 'Ethnic Nationalism', p.14.

<sup>112</sup> See, for instance, Smith, 'Europe of Nations', p.133; Hedetoft, 'Mentalities', p.297. For a discussion on how diverging interests in the sphere of defence may have undermined British attempts to accede to the EEC in 1963, see Wolfram Kaiser, 'The Bomb and Europe: Britain, France, and the EEC Entry Negotiations 1961-1963' *Journal of European Integration History* 1 (1) 1995, pp.65-85.

<sup>113</sup> See, for instance, Smith, *National Identity*, p.152; Carlo Jean, 'The Role of the Nation State', pp.76-77; Hedetoft, 'Mentalities', p.297; Heuser, 'European Strategists', p.80.

<sup>114</sup> Karl W. Haltiner, 'Is there a Common European Defence Identity? The View of Officers of Eight European Countries' *Current Sociology* 42 (3) (Winter, 1994), pp.71-85.

<sup>115</sup> Karl W. Haltiner, 'European Defence', p.81 and pp.84-85.



the creation of just such a broader European identity.<sup>116</sup> Moreover, while studies often reflect on the ability or otherwise of Central and East European states to integrate into any European defence, they rarely ask to what extent integration in defence may be a pre-requisite for the inclusion of these states in a broader European identity.

Of interest because its approach is diametrically opposed to that of this thesis, a study edited by Jolyon Howorth and Anand Menon has sought to examine the impact of European integration on national defence policies.<sup>117</sup> Despite its approach, examples emerge in the study of the influence national defence concerns exert on national conceptions of European integration.<sup>118</sup> On the whole, however, Howorth and Menon et al. are not concerned with the role of defence in the *construction* of national and European identity.

Again, however, while such studies offer valuable insights into the relationship between defence and European identity, they do so only when viewed comparatively; in isolation they do not constitute substantial analytical inquiries into the role of defence in the formation of European identity.

In summary, then, while scattered references do suggest a relationship between defence and European identity, they are rarely placed in a cohesive theoretical analytical context, and can often suffer from lack of differentiation with regard to discourse on war and 'Others' in general. Moreover, a comparative assessment of the role of defence on national *and* European identity construction has not been undertaken.

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<sup>116</sup> One worthy exception is the study undertaken at King's College London by then-LCDR Dibble RN, who investigated the degree to which a transnational identity could be forged on the bases of shared professional Naval identities. Dibble based his study on the experiences of a mixed-manned ship that sailed as part of the MLF in the 1960s. See Dibble European Navy.

<sup>117</sup> Jolyon Howorth & Anand Menon (eds.), The European Union and National Defence Policy (London; New York: Routledge, 1997).

<sup>118</sup> See particularly David Chuter, 'The United Kingdom' in Howorth & Menon (eds.), pp.105-120 and Filippo Andreatta and Christopher Hill, 'Italy' in Howorth & Menon (eds.), pp.66-86.



## CENTRAL HYPOTHESES

The previous section examined three research questions in relation to existing literature on national and European identity. In the light of this examination, three hypotheses are proposed, which together constitute an analytical framework for the analysis of national and European identity.

**Hypothesis I: National identity essentially rests on *constructed* rather than *inherent* mental attitudes, and is consequently *instrumentalist* rather than *primordial* in nature.**

*Nations and Attributes*

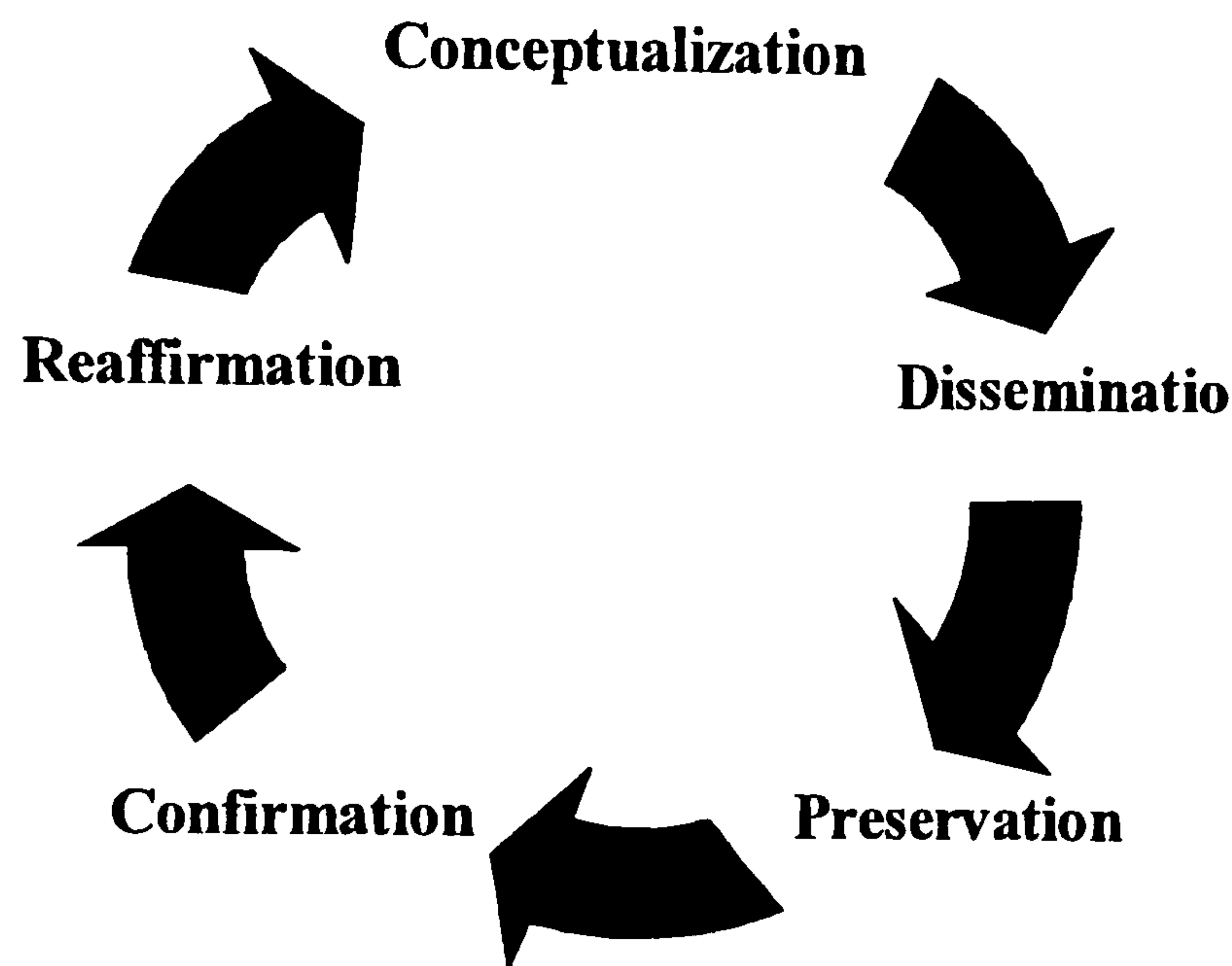
The first hypothesis of the thesis is that nations and national identity do not emerge in a vacuum of thoughts and ideas, but rather are the product of an association made between a group of individuals and a given set of values or attributes that render that group separate and distinct from any other.

Three observations can be made concerning the values and attributes of nation: (1) values and attributes can vary, but the idea of *specificity* that they convey is usually constant; (2) the idea of *specificity* generally entails, and can even be dependent upon, a notion of *greatness* and/or *superiority*; (3) an emphasis on *independence* and/or *freedom* as a value and an attribute also tends to be predominant.

A nation's specificity and greatness and/or superiority can be based on myriad religious, cultural, military or other traits. A nation's independence and freedom may in turn be perceived as the liberty to preserve, pursue and enhance those traits and attributes that render it specific.

### ***The Construction of National Identity***

The thesis contends that construction of national identity can be categorized into five main processes: *Conceptualization*; *dissemination*; *preservation*; *confirmation*; and *reaffirmation* (see Fig.1).



**Figure 1. The Processes of Identity Construction**

(1) *Conceptualization* of the nation generally occurs at the elite level, and involves the attribution of particular traits and values to a specific group by religious or intellectual elites. Elites may genuinely believe in the myths of identity they perpetuate, or may make recourse to them for the purpose of population mobilization.

(2) *Dissemination* of the national idea constitutes the progressive extension of the conceptualization of the nation from elites to the broader population. Dissemination can take place through a variety of ‘transmission mechanisms’ including print, education and cultural media. Through this dissemination a feeling of association with certain traits and characteristics becomes increasingly shared by wider segments of the population.

(3) *Preservation* of the physical assets of the nation and/or of its associated traits and values is necessary to ensure the survival of the nation. Preservation can thus entail both the defence of the national territory and population and /or the maintenance of the traditions and customs of a nation.



(4) *Confirmation* of the national idea depends on the outcome and interpretation of events that are perceived as a test of the nation. Confirmation consolidates the association between the nation and its attributes, seemingly proving the superiority of the latter, and the preordained nature of the former. When external events and circumstances belie confirmation of the national idea, the nation must be re-conceptualized, or suffer a crisis of identity.

(5) *Reaffirmation* is the structured and even institutionalized process by which the attributes of the nation are enshrined in a body of national imagery and remembrance. Reaffirmation can take place in a variety of contexts, ranging from public acts of commemoration to school texts and museums. Reaffirmation of the nation is an ongoing process, although it intensifies in the wake of moments of danger to the nation. Reaffirmation in turn reinforces, or even regenerates, the conceptualization of the nation

Despite the distinctions made above, these processes are not subject to a strict and separable order, but are rather interrelated and ongoing. Together, these processes weave a tapestry of national mentality from myths of national identity, giving definition and shape to the nation.

**Hypothesis II: Defence plays an instrumental role in the construction and reinforcement of national identity.**

This hypothesis holds that defence is critical to the national identity myths of specificity, greatness and/or superiority and freedom, and that its impact is distinct from that of *warfare* or cultural contrasts with *enemies*. In this context, three broad functions of defence can be distinguished: The *symbolic value* of the means of defence as markers of specificity, independence and sovereignty; *preparation* for defence, which includes the integrative influences of bureaucratic, administrative and institutional mechanisms, the conducting of exercises and planning, the recruitment of soldiers and officers, and the

associated symbolism of uniforms, flags and parades; and the *act* of defence, which preserves the nation but also accentuates similarities, enhances, or even establishes, the resonance of ‘national’ values and attributes and provides a common body of national myths and imagery.

With respect to the construction of national identity, defence is highly influential in each of the five processes outlined above. Firstly, defence against a greater threat can encourage a sense of similarity in contrast to an external ‘Other’, and can mobilize particular values and attributes that become instilled as ‘national’. The act of defence accentuates similarities, enhances, or even establishes, the resonance of ‘national’ values and attributes, and provides a common body of national myths and imagery (even when the act is only *perceived* or *portrayed* as defensive). Furthermore, the symbolism of defence as a marker of national specificity and independence facilitates the conceptualization of the nation. This symbolism impacts on the conceptualization of the nation even when the nation is not engaged in a physical and practical act of defence against an enemy.

Secondly, the preparations for, and logistical requirements of, defence can function as ‘transmission mechanisms’, *disseminating* the idea of the nation across elite/mass and geographical boundaries. Defence can exert an integrative impact through its associated bureaucratic, administrative and institutional apparatuses, the conducting of exercises and planning, the recruitment of soldiers and officers, and the associated symbolism of uniforms, flags and parades. The act of defence can also entrench national values and characteristics when the perceived threat is *internal*. In a military context, however, the act of defence reinforces the symbolic value of the means of defence as markers of ‘national’ independence and sovereignty.



Thirdly, defence against an external threat is often essential to the *preservation* of both the physical nation and its symbols and values. Defence can even contribute to the preservation of the nation when the latter has suffered an overwhelming physical defeat. The imagery generated by a heroic struggle against a conquering enemy can, for example, form part of a new framework of imagery that helps to sustain the identity of a subjugated people, or even that of a nation in exile.

Fourthly, successful defence can be interpreted as *confirmation* of the nation's worth, and of the superiority and justness of the nation's associated traits and values. This confirmation can serve to reinforce a conceptualization of the nation based on superiority, and even to extend its dissemination. The symbolism generated by defence can, however, also be utilized to confirm the specificity and greatness of a nation in the context of defeat.

Finally, defence, and the sacrifices made in its name, provides abundant symbolism for *reaffirmation* of the nation through, for instance, acts of public remembrance, monuments or memorials. While reaffirmation is an ongoing process, it generally derives impetus from the imperatives of national defence and from the commemoration that follows national sacrifice in defence of the nation. In the context of defence, reaffirmation reminds the population of the acts of sacrifice made in its name, and consequently reinforces the worth of the nation and its traits and values.<sup>119</sup>

In relation to the association of nations and attributes outlined above, three observations can be made: (1) defence can physically preserve 'national' traits or attributes, and thus ensure the continued *specificity* of the nation; (2) successful defence can confirm myths of identity based on *greatness* and/or *superiority*. Moreover, the

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<sup>119</sup> For a similar perspective on sacrifice rather than defence, see Ernest Renan, 'What is a Nation?' in Woolf (ed.), p.58.

moral overtones of defence are more conducive to the confirmation of national greatness and superiority than the more questionable connotations of military aggression; (3) defence attains, or maintains, the *independence* and *freedom* of the nation to pursue and enhance those traits and attributes that render it specific. In all these respects, defence has a profound impact on the construction, and nature, of a nation's identity.

**Hypothesis III: Defence plays an instrumental role in shaping national, and shared, 'European identities.'**

### ***Defence and National European Identities***

The thesis contends that defence has played an instrumental role in constructing national 'European identities'. National European identities are important to the prospects for a shared European identity because they can influence the extent to, and bases upon which, a state identifies with Europe. A particular conception of Europe can be an integral part of the national idea, while particular national ideas can set the parameters within which Europe is conceptualized. The thesis argues that national experiences of defence – and the recourse made to the imagery of national defence – profoundly influence the construction of such national ideas and parameters, and hence impact upon national conceptualizations of Europe.

### ***Defence and a Shared European Identity***

The importance of defence to construction of national identity suggests that defence may be an essential element in the construction of a shared European identity, both in terms of integration in response to perceived threats and in terms of the *symbolic* value of defence to identity, which is essential to disseminating a broader conceptualization of Europe.

It can be argued that a European identity promoted through the symbolism of European defence will be limited and artificial, yet in this context too, defence appears to



be an instrumental variable. Defence has been significant in defining, or *conceptualizing* Europe, and even in *preserving* 'European values' against a threatening 'Other', be it a Muslim or Communist enemy, in turn *confirming* their validity and even superiority. However, the construction of the European idea has undeniably taken place against the backdrop of national identity. Defence, the very factor that has encouraged the conception of Europe, has simultaneously served to entrench national identity. *Preservation*, in other words, has always been a predominantly national, rather than European, affair. Particularly in terms of *dissemination* and *reaffirmation*, European elites have faced competition, if not opposition, from national elites, and the resonance of the symbolism and imagery of defence remains most powerful in the national domain.

## METHODOLOGY

The three key questions identified in relation to the central hypotheses of the thesis constitute the framework of its methodology: (1) What are the aspects and origins of national identity and are they essentially primordial or instrumentalist in nature? (2) What evidence exists to support a relationship between defence and the development of national identity? (3) To what extent has defence influenced conceptions of European identity?

**(1) What are the aspects and origins of national identity, and are they primordial or instrumentalist?**

The question of the primordality of national identity impacts upon the theoretical arguments over the extent to which European identity can be constructed. The thesis addresses this question both theoretically, through a review of existing literature, and practically, by means of a case study approach.

### ***Theoretical Review***

Research was initially undertaken to assess the nature of national identity in a theoretical context. Aspects of national identity were isolated and discussed on the basis of perceived ‘building blocks’ of identity that have been addressed by the majority of authors in existing literature. Several key questions were asked: What role do territory, ethnicity, language, common history and culture play in the development of national identity? Are any of these aspects inherent or primordial in nature? Can certain ‘pre-requisite’ aspects of national identity be determined? Of what, in other words, does national identity consist, and how does it come into being?

### ***Case Study Approach***

A case study approach was then adopted to examine the aspects and origins of national identity in three European states. A comparative approach was selected in order to broaden the analytical framework of the thesis and enhance the validity of conclusions reached.

Three principal steps were necessary to address research question (2): (i) the selection of appropriate case study states; (ii) the identification of aspects of national identity in each case study state; and (iii) an examination of the origins of these aspects of national identity.

#### ***(i) Selection of Case Study States***

While the inclusion of a greater number of states might have been advantageous, the qualitative nature of the thesis restricted the number of case studies undertaken. Conversely, an analysis of two states might simply have resulted in a commentary on difference. The need to undertake a manageable thesis within the qualitative approach, combined with the desire to reach conclusions with the greatest possible validity, led to



the selection of three specific case study states; Britain, France and Italy. Four principal reasons exist for this selection.

Firstly, Britain (more specifically, England) and France are considered examples of ‘old nations’, whose identity is claimed to have naturally evolved over time.<sup>120</sup> Italy’s identity, on the other hand, can be perceived as being at best culturally old, but politically new and constructed. A comparison between the apparently different origins of identity in each state is consequently pertinent to the primordialist versus instrumentalist debate.

Secondly, Britain and France are ‘great power’ states, nuclear powers and permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. Both aspire to exert influence on the world stage and see an active role in defence and foreign affairs as essential in enabling them to do so. An association with success in the military field is important in the national mentality of each state. Post-war Italy, on the other hand, is often described as non-militaristic, with few aspirations to military greatness or prowess. For the purposes of this study, Italy therefore functions as a control; does defence only have an impact on national identity in states that have specifically harnessed their identity to military symbolism? In other words, is defence simply a reflection of a state’s identity, or is it instrumental in the construction of that identity?

Thirdly, these three states were selected because it can be argued that their national identities were formed in figurative, if not literal, battle with one another. The Hundred Years War (1337-1453) between England and France, for instance, proved an early breeding ground for myths of difference between two peoples who had previously been heavily intertwined, and was a precursor of the later rivalry between France and Britain. Similarly, the Napoleonic occupation of Italy in the Nineteenth Century

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<sup>120</sup> See Seton-Watson, pp.7-8, though England, not Britain, is the primary focus of analysis.

prompted the dissemination of embryonic national identity among at least an elite circle of Italians.

Fourthly, Britain, France and Italy have placed different emphasis on European integration thus far. Britain has skirted on the periphery, standing aside from the core European nations in the main developments on the path to integration, and not yet seeking fulfillment of its role in a primarily European context. In France, a sense of 'mission' is distinctly linked to Europe, to the point where it has been argued that the French 'believe, more or less, that Europe will simply be a greater France'.<sup>121</sup> Italy too perceives a close connection with Europe, located primarily in a congruity of spiritual and classical traditions. A comparison of states with differing European visions accentuated the focus on defence as an independent variable, with the aim of enhancing the validity of the conclusions reached.

*(ii) Identification of Aspects of National Mentality*

It is a given that a 'nation' or culture (being itself a construct) contains different, yet sometimes overlapping groups, that hold differing and sometimes competing views of their country and what it represents.<sup>122</sup> It is consequently difficult to reduce any national identity to a set of definite, concrete and unopposed criteria, and this thesis does not attempt to do so. It is possible, however, to focus on an area in which certain aspects of national identity may be revealed.

If the objective is to illustrate how aspects of national identity are founded on selective myths, the area itself is of little significance. One could, for example, seek to identify myths of identity through an examination of art, literature or music. A premise

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<sup>121</sup> Peter Schmidt (ed.), In the Midst of Change: On the Development of West European Security and Defence Cooperation (European Security Analysis Network, 1992), p.19.

<sup>122</sup> On culture, groups, sub-cultures and sub-groups, see Michael Singer, 'Relativism, Culture, Religion and Identity' in Courtney W. Howland (ed.), Religious Fundamentalism and the Human Rights of Women (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), pp. 45-54.



of the thesis, however, is that an intrinsic relationship exists between defence and national identity, and that the most revealing myths of national identity are manifested in the context of defence. Moreover, these myths extend beyond the realm of defence, and are reflected in precisely such mediums as art, literature or music.

Research was not undertaken on mass indicators of national sentiment. Rather, in the tradition of the *mentalité* school, a qualitative approach was adopted, focusing on elite debates rather than quantitative sources such as opinion polls and surveys. Aspects of national identity were consequently assessed in a specific historical context through a review of parliamentary defence debates, supplemented with archive press commentary, from each case study state (for selected time periods and source justification, see 'Primary Sources' below). Aspects of identity were determined on the basis of traits or qualities that were appealed to by a cross-section of the legislature in support of often competing arguments, indicating their general resonance, regardless of political affiliation. As a general rule, cross-legislative appeal was the litmus test applied in the identification of traits or values as aspects of national mentality. Comprehensive outlines of party-policies on defence, however, were not an objective of the research undertaken.

### *(iii) Examination of Origins of National Identity*

Once aspects of identity were identified, their origins were assessed through a historical case study of each country. To some extent origins of identity were reviewed chronologically, but a comprehensive chronological history of the development of national identity in each state was not the central objective. Rather, each case study examined the origins of aspects of national identity through a series of 'snap-shots' taken across a wide historical spectrum. These 'snap-shots' were created primarily through reference to diverse secondary sources on the emergence of national identity in the three case study states.

Historical ‘snap-shots’ were then utilized in assessing whether the aspects of identity revealed in elite debates were essentially primordial or instrumentalist; in other words, what were the origins of the identity belief systems upon which elites based arguments that purported to be based on logic and rationality?

**(2) What evidence exists to indicate a relationship between defence and national identity?**

The comparative case study approach was simultaneously applied to an examination of the relationship between defence and national identity. For each country, a historical analysis was undertaken of the impact of defence on the establishment of particular traits and attributes as ‘national’. Defence was deemed to have exerted an impact on national identity when an analysis of national historiography indicated a strong correlation between the *symbolism of, preparation for, or act of* defence and any of the five processes of national identity construction described above. A relationship between defence and national identity was also deemed to exist on the basis of commentary on the ‘nation’ and ‘identity’ and related remarks in elite legislative and Press debates from a specific historical period (see source and time period rationale in ‘Primary Sources’ below).

**(3) What role has defence played in conceptions of European identity?**

Preliminary findings for research questions (1) and (2) indicated both a predominantly *instrumentalist* nature of national identity, and a strong synergy between defence and national identity. A similar qualitative case study approach was subsequently adopted in order to assess the role of defence in the development of European identity.



As in research question (1), a comprehensive party-political history on attitudes towards European integration was not an objective. Rather, aspects of European identity were identified on the basis of the main cross-party conceptions of Europe revealed in parliamentary debates on the EEC, supplemented with archive press commentary, from each case study state (for time period and source justification, see ‘Primary Sources’ below).

In terms of European identities, defence was deemed to have exerted an impact when 1) aspects of *national* identity demonstrated to have been influenced by defence were referred to in legislatures or in the Press in the context of national conceptions of Europe and of a state’s role within Europe and 2) when specific references to national and European defence were made in the context of national conceptions of Europe and of a state’s role within Europe.

It must be emphasized that the thesis does not set out to methodically and individually test the processes of identity-construction outlined in the hypotheses. Rather, the thesis paints a broad landscape in which the relationships between defence and the construction of national and European identity may be thrown into relief.

## SOURCES

### Primary Sources

#### *Elite vs. Mass sources*

The focus on elite sources – legislative debates and press commentary – adopted in the methodology could be criticized on the basis that findings will not adequately reflect mass opinion, and that national identity is, after all, a mass sentiment. The thesis, however, contends that there exists an inherent relationship between elite debates and public sentiment in terms of the myths drawn upon in the former to appeal to the latter.

Moreover, elites, while often privileged, are generally a product of the 'national' society, and are therefore likely to have been exposed to national myths of identity.

It is admittedly difficult to ascertain whether elites are subconsciously influenced by myths of identity, or consciously draw upon such myths because they believe them to have general resonance. Such a distinction, however, does not have a bearing on the conclusions of the thesis. A resort to myths of identity, be it subconscious *or* conscious, supports the case for their relevance to national identity. This is even more the case in representative democracies, where elected members of legislatures are aware of the need for public support and can be expected to take this need into account in the formulation of their arguments. Such arguments thus reflect the belief systems that influence elites as well as their perceptions of the imagery and symbolism that will exert resonance among the population.<sup>123</sup> Elite debate can consequently be very pertinent to a discussion of national identity.

As the British Upper House of Parliament is not elected, however, it can be argued that this pertinence is somewhat diminished in debates from the House of Lords. To facilitate comparison, the thesis only refers to debates from the lower houses of the states concerned.

### ***Parliamentary Debates***

The rationale for the use of defence debates is based on a two main factors. Firstly, and in very basic terms, the purpose of defence is to protect a state from external attack, either actively or as a deterrent, thus safeguarding its freedom to pursue a particular way of 'national life' and values. Therefore, defence debates often contain illustrative examples of the *ends* of defence, as well as addressing the *means* for defence. In other words, defence debates reflect those qualities or aspects of a nation that form part



of its identity and that are believed to make (or are portrayed as making) a nation worth defending.

Secondly, decisions on defence are not taken in a vacuum; they are affected not just by the need to defend one's own territory, but also by the role that a state believes it must perform on the world stage. Defence debates often underline a state's perception of this role, which itself is an indicator of a state's identity.

The defence debates selected are from the three years leading up to the accession of each state (or attempt to accede in the case of Britain) to the European Economic Community – 1956-58 for France and Italy, and February 1960-February 1963 for Britain.<sup>124</sup> In each country, the prominent backdrop of European integration accentuated the importance of sovereignty and identity, and the debates provide a stark silhouette against which contemporary national mentalities can be assessed.

The rationale for the use of debates on accession to the European Economic Community, and the time frame selected, is similar. It is self-evident that debates on European integration offer specific insights into states' perspectives of both the European idea and their perceived role within it. Furthermore, the prospect of integration itself increased the emotive resonance of these perspectives and perceptions.

Primary sources therefore include *Hansard's House of Commons Debates*, (1960-February 1963), *Journal Officiel de la République de France, Assemblée Nationale* (1956, 57, 58) and *Atti Parlamentari Camera dei Deputati, Discussioni* (1956, 57, 58). Citations from original language parliamentary sources were translated into English by this author.

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<sup>123</sup> See Heuser, *Nuclear Mentalities*, p.2.

<sup>124</sup> In February 1963 Britain's application for membership to the EEC was vetoed by General de Gaulle of France.

### ***Supplementary Press Commentary***

Reference to legislative debates is supplemented by the use of newspaper archives on defence and on Europe from each country for the period specified. Press archives provide additional insights on the resonance of national and European mentalities for the periods studied, and are consequently considered primary sources within the qualitative methodology of the thesis.

Press commentary on Britain was drawn primarily from the International Institute of Strategic Studies Press Library in London, which includes holdings of *The Times*; *The Observer*; *The Guardian*; *The Daily Telegraph*; and *The Daily Express*. Press commentary on France and Italy is based primarily on the Chatham House Press Collection (now housed at the Collindale Newspaper Library of the British Library in London). Newspapers from this collection include, for France, *Le Monde*; *Le Figaro*; *Le Populaire*; *Combat*; *l'Unité*; and for Italy, *Il Nuovo Corriere della Sera*; *La Nuova Stampa*; *l'Unità*; *Il Popolo*. Additional references were drawn from the individual newspaper holdings of the Collindale Newspaper Library and the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.

The press sources referred to reflect a broad political spread, but are predominantly upper-quality broadsheets, so as to illustrate how 'myths' of identity are located not just in extremist, or populist propaganda, but rather form part of the general subconscious fabric of national identity. Citations from original language press sources were translated into English by this author.

### **Secondary Sources**

#### ***Theoretical Review***

As discussed above, the thesis also undertakes a theoretical review of existing literature on national identity. This literature includes theoretical works on the nature of



national identity,<sup>125</sup> comparative studies on national identity in given countries,<sup>126</sup> and more focused texts on the development of national identity in a particular country or given historical period.<sup>127</sup>

### *Origins of National Identity*

The origins of aspects of national mentality and national conceptions of Europe were examined primarily through reference to existing secondary literature relating to national identity in Britain, France and Italy.<sup>128</sup> As discussed above, extensive research has already been carried out (although comparatively recently) on the construction of national identity, and it would have been not only unnecessary, but also unfeasible, for this thesis to embark upon a duplication of all existing work. The value of the thesis instead lies in the perspective on defence and identity that a more holistic overview of existing literature permits.

### STRUCTURE

Chapter One of the thesis, *Nations and National Identity - Aspects and Origins*, presents a theoretical analysis of the primordial versus instrumentalist debate, based on a review of existing literature on national identity. Chapters Two through Nine assess the impact of defence on national and European identity in Britain, France and Italy. Three chapters are devoted to case studies of Britain, France and Italy respectively. In each

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<sup>125</sup> For instance, Smith, Gellner and Connor.

<sup>126</sup> See, for instance, Greenfeld, Llobera.

<sup>127</sup> See, for instance, Colley, Jones, Citron.

<sup>128</sup> See for instance Colley; Thorlac Turville-Petre, *England the Nation: Language, Literature and National Identity 1290-1340* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); Michael Zylbergberg, *Sentiment National et Identité Culturelle dans la France du XVI<sup>e</sup> Siècle* *Cahiers d'Histoire* (63) (1996); Beverly Allen and Mary Russo (eds.), *Revisioning Italy: National Identity and Global Culture* (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 1997); Gérard Noiriel, *The French Melting Pot: Immigration, Citizenship, and National Identity* tr. Geoffroy de Laforcade (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Gian Enrico Rusconi: (ed.), *Nazione, etnia, cittadinanza in Italia e in Europa* (Brescia, La Scuola, 1993.); Stephen Haseler, *The English Tribe: Identity, Nation and Europe* (London: Macmillan, 1996); Brian Jenkins and Spyros A. Sofos (eds.), *Nation and identity in Contemporary Europe* (London; New York: Routledge, 1996); Eric S. Gruen, *Culture and Identity in Republican Rome* (London: Duckworth, 1993).

instance, the first country-specific chapter analyzes the impact of defence on the construction of aspects of national identity through a series of historical ‘snap-shots’; the second examines national mentality and the relationship between defence and identity in the context of defence debates; and the third assesses the impact of defence on national ‘European identities’ in the context of debates on European integration.

## CONCLUSION

In adopting a comparative approach to the question of the aspects and origins of national *and* European identity, the thesis hopes to provide a more cohesive study of the whether and how European identity can be constructed. By focusing on the role of defence in national and European identity construction the thesis seeks to address a gap in existing literature. The thesis also tries to offer a framework that may be used to assess national mentalities – and guiding motivations - in other states. In addition, it is hoped that a study into the relationship between defence and identity may contribute insights into the means of promoting a lasting integration, not just among the nations of the European Union, but also between East and West. If Western Europe’s identity stemmed in part from Cold War defence against its Eastern sibling, then perhaps European identity can only stem from a Western *and* Eastern - a truly *European* - defence.



# CHAPTER ONE – NATIONS AND NATIONAL IDENTITY: ASPECTS AND ORIGINS IN A THEORETICAL CONTEXT

## INTRODUCTION

The focus of this chapter is a theoretical investigation of the first hypothesis of the thesis; that national identity is constructed. The chapter examines aspects and origins of national identity through reference to existing literature to assess whether national identity is inherent and primordial, or whether it is constructed and instrumentalist in nature. The conclusions reached in this chapter form the theoretical basis for the analysis of national and European identity undertaken in subsequent chapters.

### Definitions

Part of the difficulty in rendering any assessment on the nature of national identity stems from the varied criteria attributed to the 'nation'. The 'nation' has been described as the highest overarching community commanding an individual's loyalty, overriding both smaller, and greater, collective identities that an individual might share.<sup>1</sup> Yet authors differ in their perceptions of the bases for this overarching loyalty. Some stress the nation as primarily an ethnic and cultural entity.<sup>2</sup> Others perceive an evolution in the meaning of nation from an ethnically based group to one that is politically defined.<sup>3</sup>

Most authors agree that nations are groups that *believe* they are nations, and that it is this self-definition, rather than any actual factual basis, which distinguishes them from

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<sup>1</sup> Rupert Emerson, From Empire to Nation The Rise to Self-assertion of Asian and African Peoples (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1960), pp.95-96.

<sup>2</sup> See for instance, Pierre Van den Berghe, 'Race and Ethnicity: A Sociobiological Perspective', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 1 (4) (1978); Max Weber, 'The Nation' in H.H. Gerth & C. Wright Mills (eds.), From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology (London: Routledge & Keegan Paul Ltd, 1970).

<sup>3</sup> See, for instance, E.H. Carr, Nationalism and After (London: Macmillan, 1968); Alfred Cobban, The Nation State and Self-Determination Revised Edition (London: Collins 1969); Liah Greenfeld, Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1994).



other collectivities. For some, however, a belief in common ethnicity is fundamental,<sup>4</sup> while for others the source of national identity is identification with a state, either as subjects, or as citizens.<sup>5</sup> For others still, the nation is an invented construct, created by nationalism to meet the needs of the modern state.<sup>6</sup>

The nation is thus something which is perceived, but the essence of which cannot be easily explained, because it exists in different forms and rests on disputed foundations. National identity has consequently been described as ‘....fundamentally multi-dimensional; it can never be reduced to a single element....’<sup>7</sup>

### **Primordialists and Instrumentalists: Origins of Nations**

While authors disagree on the precise aspects that constitute national identity, they tend to subscribe to one of two broad camps of thought regarding the origins of nations, broadly referred to as the *primordialist* and *instrumentalist* approaches.<sup>8</sup>

Primordialists see the division of the world into particular nations as natural and unavoidable, and place great emphasis on blood ties and ethnicity in the formation of nations and national identity.<sup>9</sup> Moderate primordialists place less emphasis on blood ties, but still stress the continuity of certain nations over others. In this sense they discern a

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<sup>4</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (London: Penguin, 1991) Walker Connor, ‘A Nation is a Nation, is a State, is an Ethnic Group, is a...’ *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 1 (4) (1978)

<sup>5</sup> See, for instance, John Stuart Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government* (London: People’s Edition, Longmans, Green & Co. MDCCCLXVII), p.120; Ulf Hedetoft, *Signs of Nations, Studies in the Political Semiotics of Self and Other in Contemporary European Nationalism* (Aldershot: Dartmouth Publishing Co., 1995), p.180.

<sup>6</sup> See, for instance, Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983).

<sup>7</sup> Smith, *National Identity*, p. 14.

<sup>8</sup> This distinction is made by Paul R. Brass in *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison* (New Delhi: Sage, 1991), p.74.

<sup>9</sup> See, for instance, Van den Berghe, ‘Race and Ethnicity’, and Van den Berghe, ‘Does Race Matter?’ *Nations and Nationalism* 1 (3) (1995); Joshua Fishman, ‘Social Theory and Ethnography’ in ‘Peter Sugar (ed.), *Ethnic Diversity and Conflict in Eastern Europe* (Santa Barbara: Clio, 1980).



difference between ‘old, continuous nations’ and less stable, artificially constructed ones.<sup>10</sup>

In contrast, instrumentalists see nothing inevitable in the emergence of nations. As with primordialists, however, two broad distinctions exist within instrumentalist thought. In the ‘modernist’<sup>11</sup> perspective, nations are wholly a product of the modern era, invented by elites to meet the needs of states, or formed as a result of elite competition during the modernization process.<sup>12</sup> The ‘historicist’ approach instead allows for the existence of nations and national identity in the pre-modern era, while emphasizing the importance of a conscious, even deliberate, nation-building process.<sup>13</sup>

These distinctions are not definitive. There are wide-ranging perspectives on the nation and on national identity, explored more fully below, which do not fit neatly into one category or another. The distinctions are helpful as a general guide, however, in that the central question of whether nations and identity are primordial or constructed underlies the following discussion.

### ASPECTS OF NATIONS

What are the main attributes of nations and national identity, and can any be deemed to render national identity inherent and primordial? The aspects outlined below constitute recurring themes in existing literature on national identity, although they are subject to varied interpretation by different authors. The following does not purport to be

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<sup>10</sup> See, for instance, Hugh Seton-Watson, Nations & States An Enquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., London 1977).

<sup>11</sup> See John Hutchinson, Modern Nationalism (London: Fontana, 1994), pp. 3-7.

<sup>12</sup> See for instance, Gellner, Nations and Nationalism; Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), The Invention of Tradition (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Connor ‘A Nation is a Nation...’

<sup>13</sup> Reynolds; Carr. A similar categorization is applied by Smith, who refers to the ‘perennial’ approach, within which authors perceive a continuity between pre-modern cultural identities and modern nations while recognizing the modernity of nationalism and rejecting national identity as primordial. See Anthony Smith, Nationalism and Modernism (London; New York: Routledge, 1998), p.159.



a comprehensive analysis of authors' writings, but rather refers to existing literature with the aim of addressing the inherence or otherwise of national identity.

### **The Civic and Ethnic Models**

The civic and ethnic models, also referred to as the French and German models,<sup>14</sup> represent two contrasting theories of national development. The models merit particular attention because they represent two of the most prominent perspectives on the national identity debate.

The civic model stresses the importance of what Clifford Geertz terms 'civic' sentiments,<sup>15</sup> bonds of citizenship and representation that are reinforced by the advantages the state apparatus is perceived to offer. For authors who fall into the civic camp, national identity can be promoted and disseminated as the state develops. As Sofos and Jenkins write, this French-inspired 'citizenship' model places an '....essentially *associasionist* emphasis on the nation as a voluntary (and therefore 'open') association, the product of political will....'<sup>16</sup> Nations are not necessarily artificial, in that civic sentiments can be genuine, but their voluntary nature means that neither the development nor the membership of nations are preordained, or constrained, by ethnic origins.

In contrast, the ethnic, or German, model, emphasizes the importance of ancestry and natural differences in history, language and culture. Here, the nation is not voluntary, but 'historically determined.'<sup>17</sup> The role of the state versus the role of ethnicity lies at the heart of one of the most crucial questions surrounding the concept of national identity- are

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<sup>14</sup> Brian Jenkins and Spyros A. Sofos (eds.), 'Nation and Nationalism In Contemporary Europe, A Theoretical Perspective' in Brian Jenkins and Spyros A. Sofos (eds.), Nation & Identity in Contemporary Europe, (London: Routledge, 1996), p.15. A similar distinction can be found in Emily A. Vogt, 'Civilisation and Kultur: Keywords in the History of French and German Citizenship' *Ecumene* 3 (2) (1996), pp.125-140.

<sup>15</sup> Clifford Geertz, 'The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States' in Clifford Geertz (ed.) Old Societies and New States: The Quest for Modernity in Asia and Africa (New York: Free Press, 1963), p.110.

<sup>16</sup> Jenkins and Sofos 'Nationalism', p.15.



nations, and *de facto* national identity, intrinsic, their progress and development destined and preordained, or are nations accidents of history?

### *The Civic Model*

The role of the state in the development of national identity can be broken down into six main perspectives; state-fulfillment, state-building, state-myths, state-representative, state-needs, and state-irrelevance models.

### *State-Fulfillment*

In the state-fulfillment model, the role of the state in shaping national identity can be traced back to the early philosophical traditions of Johann Fichte (1762-1814) and F.W. Schelling (1775-1854). According to these traditions, the ‘whole’ is greater than the individual, as the latter can only exist and achieve fulfillment within the former. Individuals, in fact, ‘.... are phantoms; they gain reality in so far as they have a place in the whole.’<sup>18</sup>

Elie Kedourie argues that it was from this philosophy that post-Kantians developed a theory of the state, according to which the value of the state supersedes that of the individual, being the only vehicle for his fulfillment.<sup>19</sup> In this context, the state gives meaning to the individual, and is the only repository of his identity.

The state, however, is also argued to safeguard the diversity of nations; a diversity willed by God. Nations are not the result of a common consent to be governed, but a reflection of God’s plan for variety on earth. Nations are unique and so must be preserved; ‘....every culture, every individuality, has a unique incomparable value....[and] there is a duty laid upon us to cultivate our own peculiar qualities and not mix or merge

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Elie Kedourie *Nationalism* (Hutchinson, London, 1960), p.38.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

them with others.’<sup>20</sup> For authors like Johann Herder (1744-1803) or theologians like Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), any attempt to dilute national identity or form a wider, multinational entity therefore becomes a ‘....sin against the principle of diversity....’<sup>21</sup>

For Immanuel Kant also, divisions are willed by nature, as evidenced by differences in language and religion, but the hatreds that these differences sometimes engender can only be resolved through the gradual progress of civilization and ‘lively competition’ between nations. A universal state can only impose an artificial and ‘despotic’ peace and therefore contradicts ‘....the nature of the world...the course and the fulfillment of history alike....’; the world ‘....must be a world of many states.’<sup>22</sup>

The notion that national identity depends upon a God-willed diversity between states is, however, far from concrete. The survival of nations in the absence of a state (such as the Jewish nation, for instance), or even the example of Italy’s weak state-nation bonds, suggest that self-realization and fulfillment within a state are not essential pre-requisites for national identity. Moreover, if diversity is an essential principle, and national identity is the manifestation of such a principle, then regional, or even individual diversity should also be of value, and fulfillment should not necessarily be linked to submersion in a particular state or national identity.

### *State-representation*

Even if one does not accept a primordial role for the state, there are strong arguments to suggest that political participation and representation are important state-functions in the development of national identity. The origins of this representative link between the people and the state are argued to date back to the French Revolution. Alfred

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<sup>20</sup> Kedourie, p.58

<sup>21</sup> Kedourie, p.59.

<sup>22</sup> Kedourie, p.53.



Cobban and E.H. Carr, for instance, highlight the writings of Locke, Rousseau and the influence of the French Revolution in extending the concept of 'nation' from an elite-based association with the monarch to synonymy with a mass, and sovereign, people.<sup>23</sup>

According to this interpretation, individuals developed a more sophisticated conception of themselves as members of a nation through political participation and representation based on a new type of link with the state that had previously been denied to them. Individuals were gradually transformed from subjects into citizens, ushering in the era of the nation-state in the second half of the Eighteenth Century.<sup>24</sup>

For some, the representative nation-state and nationality are even more entwined. According to J.S. Mill, for instance, it is only when individuals develop sufficient fellow-feeling to wish to associate with one another and be governed *exclusively* by members of their group that they can be termed a nation.<sup>25</sup> This desire to be united under a common representative government is a necessary criterion of nationality, and nation and national identity can have little meaning in the absence of citizenship and representation. Mill acknowledges that it is possible for different nations to be united under certain conditions, especially if a conquering nation is more advanced and refrains from oppressive, unjust rule,<sup>26</sup> or if different nations are faced with '....a despotic government which is a stranger to all of them....'<sup>27</sup> Yet for Mill, the aspiration to free representative government will always pose a formidable challenge to such unification.<sup>28</sup>

However, the French Revolution and the notion of representation are not the only explanations for the transformation from 'nation and sovereign' to 'sovereign nation'.

Liah Greenfeld, for instance, attributes this change to Sixteenth Century England where

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<sup>23</sup> Cobban, pp.33-34, and Carr, pp.7-8. See also Jenkins & Sofos, 'Nationalism' p.13.

<sup>24</sup> Josep R. Llobera, The God of Modernity (Oxford; Providence: Berg, 1994), p.111.

<sup>25</sup> Mill, p.120.

<sup>26</sup> Mill, p.123.

<sup>27</sup> Mill, p.124

the ‘nation’ was first conceived as a term of reference to the English elite, and over time came to be associated with the geographical, political and ethnic characteristics of England and its inhabitants.<sup>29</sup> Greenfeld argues that by virtue of international interaction, the term ‘nation’ became increasingly applied to other peoples with their own geographical boundaries and ruling elites, until it came to signify a ‘unique’ sovereign people.<sup>30</sup>

Moreover, the persistence of nations in the absence of the state undermines the insistence on representation as a precondition of nationality. Similarly, while political representation may well enhance an individual’s stake in the state and his perception of belonging, can one seriously deny the existence of national identity in undemocratic states?

### *State-building*

In this perspective, the extension of the state’s bureaucratic and administrative apparatus, including transport and education mechanisms, is an important tool in nation-building. Indeed, state- and nation-building are often seen as ‘....the distinguishable but inseparable parts of the same phenomenon.’<sup>31</sup>

Josep Llobera, Susan Reynolds, E.H. Carr and Anthony Smith, for example, all see a role for medieval monarchs in constructing collective consciousness through an extension of their authority and administrative apparatus, which disseminated an awareness among individuals of being subjects in the same kingdom.<sup>32</sup>

Similarly, in the modern era, the state is argued to meet more and more of its members needs, to the point where individuals come to appreciate the value of the state.

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Greenfeld, p.8.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Llobera, p.106.

<sup>32</sup> Smith, *National Identity*, p.60; Llobera, p.114; Reynolds, p.253.



Hedetoft, for example, argues that through this appreciation, the ‘economic-political’ bases of individuals’ relationship with the state ‘....become transformed into apoliticised emotionalism.’<sup>33</sup>

Once again, however, the survival of the Jewish nation in the absence of a state, or the lack of civic ties at the state level in Italy, contradict these functions as pre-requisite criteria for nations and national identity.

### *State-disseminated myths*

Even more important to some authors than state-building *per se*, is the capability this process bestows upon the state for the dissemination of the ‘national idea.’ In monarchical dynasties this idea can be disseminated to a largely illiterate population in the form of symbols and imagery, often through association with existing, widespread, religious institutions and symbolism or ecclesiastical historians.<sup>34</sup> E.H. Carr highlights the identification of the medieval nation with the sovereign in the wake of the decline of the unity of church and empire and the creation of the national state.<sup>35</sup> In more modern societies, this dissemination is facilitated by education, print, and public ceremonies.<sup>36</sup>

Smith draws a distinction between countries where the state disseminated national identity in such a manner (*lateral ethnies*) and those where national identity developed in the absence of, or even in competition with, the state (*vertical ethnies*), and was instead disseminated by religious elites or secular intellectuals.<sup>37</sup> Smith, however, argues that even in *lateral ethnies*, the presence of an ethnically homogeneous dominant core able to disseminate its own existing myths and traditions to the rest of the population is essential

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<sup>33</sup> Hedetoft, *Nations*, p.180.

<sup>34</sup> See, for instance, Colette Beaune’s comprehensive work on the emergence of French identity, *Naissance de la nation France / The Birth of an Ideology: Myths and Symbols of Nation in Late-Medieval France* ; translated by Susan Ross Huston; edited by Fredric L. Cheyette (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991). See also Le Goff, p.190.

<sup>35</sup> Carr, pp.2-3.

to the development of national identity.<sup>38</sup> Therefore, while Smith acknowledges a ‘civic’ aspect of national identity, his emphasis on an ethnically homogeneous core places him more firmly in the ethnic model camp, discussed below, rather than in the civic model camp.

Moreover, the dissemination of the national idea by religious or secular intellectuals that occurs in Smith’s *vertical ethnies* suggests that it is elites and the dissemination process, rather than the state, that are significant to the development of national identity.

### *State-needs model*

In this model, the nation is a product of the modern era, whereby industrialization, urbanization, and the needs of capitalism prompt the dissemination of national consciousness. According to Gellner, for instance, industrialization creates conflict between workers and dominant classes, during which diverse populations in the lower strata come to perceive a common identity in contrast to upper class elites.<sup>39</sup> For Gellner, urbanization brings different peoples into contact with one another, and in the absence of traditional common points of reference, they develop new symbols and imagery that resonate on a broader scale.<sup>40</sup> Under this model, the nation cannot have existed before the advent of the modern state.

This ‘modernist’ approach is countered by convincing arguments that national identity existed in pre-capitalist and pre-modern states. Anthony Richmond, for instance, writes that the nation has undergone a transformation from a collectivity based on a feudal economy, theocratic state and religious legitimization, to one based on a capitalist

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<sup>36</sup> See, for instance, Benedict Anderson *Imagined Communities- Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso Editions, 1983); Gellner; Hobsbawm & Ranger (eds.).

<sup>37</sup> Smith *National Identity*, pp. 52-68.

<sup>38</sup> Smith, *National Identity*, p.55.

<sup>39</sup> Gellner *Nations*, p.55.



economy, secular state and nationalist legitimization.<sup>41</sup> An association based on a global economy, legitimated by ideology, may transcend even this incarnation of the nation.<sup>42</sup>

While nations should not necessarily be seen as ‘existing through time’, the state-needs model places too great an emphasis on a sharp break in history between the modern and pre-modern eras, especially given the difficulty in precisely differentiating between the former and the latter.

### *State-irrelevance*

For Walker Connor, the association between state- and nation- building is wholly misplaced. According to Connor, the word nation derives from the Latin *nasci*, meaning ‘to be born’, and originally referred to a breed or race of people.<sup>43</sup> Connor states that the meaning of ‘nation’ has become corrupted over time so that it now refers to all the inhabitants of a particular country, and has become interchangeable with the word ‘state.’<sup>44</sup> This, Connor argues, has led some to believe that state-building equates to nation-building, whereas in fact the state can only serve as a focus of loyalty for a pre-existing nation.

There are, however, two main problems with Connor’s argument. Firstly, Connor does not convincingly refute the argument that a state’s administrative and representative functions may contribute to the construction of a shared, civic identity among individuals that perceive themselves as ethnically diverse.

Secondly, Connor raises the example of the citizens of the United States, who, he argues, do not constitute a nation in the strict sense because they do not base their collective identity on common descent, imagined or otherwise. This, however,

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<sup>40</sup> Gellner *Nations*, p.55.

<sup>41</sup> Anthony Richmond, ‘Ethnic Nationalism and Post-Industrialism’ *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 7 (1) (1984).

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> Connor, ‘A Nation is a Nation’, p.381.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

contradicts Connor's own definition of the nation as a self-defined and self-aware group as it seems quite apparent that the majority of individuals in the United States consider themselves to be members of the American nation, regardless of ethnic diversity, and that the state has an integrative role as a focus for collective consciousness. Either the citizens of the United States must be classified as a nation, or it must be accepted that individuals with multiple 'ethnic' origins can share the same state as an object of 'civic' national loyalty.

Connor thus appears to underestimate the importance of change in the meaning of 'nation.' The term 'nation' does now have political undertones, whatever its origins may be, and this would suggest that the nation's members may now be politically, rather than ethnically, defined.

In the light of the above models, to what extent is the state necessary for the development of national identity? According to Smith, the concept of national identity 'involves some sense of political community, however tenuous'<sup>45</sup> but to what degree is this the case?

The immediate answer is that to claim the state is always or never significant in the development of nations and national identity is to over-simplify its impact. Examples of states that have contributed to nation-formation can be countered with examples of nations that are argued to exist in the absence of a national state. Even in its physical absence, however, the *idea* of the state often occupies a prominent place in recent and contemporary claims to nationhood. This is probably a symptom of an epoch during which the concepts of state and nation have become synonymous, even though the two seldom neatly coincide. It may also be a result of the perceived advantages that an independent state can bring to a stateless population.



In any case, the nation-building functions of the state, whether they be the extension of representation, dissemination of funds of imagery or otherwise, are essentially instrumentalist in nature. Unless one subscribes to the primordialist argument that certain nations were preordained, it is difficult to argue that the integrative functions of a state are inherently bound to a specific nation.

Ironically, despite the inclusive nature of the civic nation, which can in theory incorporate diverse peoples in a civic identity, it is precisely the powerful association of the concept of a particular nation with a specific state that most restricts the imagination when it comes to the prospects for transcending national identity. A European state, for instance, could not in theory incorporate multiple nations in an over-arching identity because one of the principles of nations, as opposed to ethnic groups, is that they find expression within their own state. It is not a question, therefore, of whether states or nations have always existed, but of whether the *relationship* between the two is inherent. This association appears perpetual, whereas, in fact, it is relatively recent. Ancient Greeks, for instance, shared a common identity regardless of the many *polis* they inhabited, while Charlemagne's Europe boasted a multitude of nations.

The question automatically arises; did the ancient Greeks or the states of Charlemagne's Europe really constitute nations? As far as the question of transcending identity goes, it makes very little difference. If these collectives were nations, then it may be stated that nations can exist in the absence of a state, and many nations can live within a state. If these collectives did not constitute nations, then nations cannot possibly be inherent; they are simply recent, and probably artificial, divisions that can be transcended by a new, higher collective identity, just as they transcended earlier, pre-existing identities.

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<sup>45</sup> Smith, National Identity, p.9.

*The Ethnic Model*

In contrast to the notion of identity through participation and representation in the state is the tenet that nationality is not something that can ever be genuinely acquired but something to which one is born, and from which one cannot escape. In the ethnic, sometimes referred to as German, model, nations and national identity stem from what Geertz has termed ‘primordial attachments.’<sup>46</sup> These attachments are primarily based on blood ties and traditions that are deemed to be inherent only to the members of that particular community, and cannot be assumed or broken at will. Though they may vary in strength and nature from person to person, they are essentially ‘....natural – some would say spiritual....’ in nature.<sup>47</sup> Thus, whereas under the ‘French’ or ‘Civic’ model, nationality is largely defined through residence and extension of citizenship rights, under the German model, descendance and ancestry are the dominant criteria for nationality. As Ulf Hedetoft writes in his study of identity in Europe, national identity in the ethnic model, ‘....argues for a deep, existential, naturalist bonding between citizens of a particular country along the lines of the *ius sanguinis* (the right of blood) and within the firm circumference of a common cosmology of natural values.’<sup>48</sup>

The obvious question that springs to mind, however, is how nations differ from ethnic groups. If nations are based on ethnic sentiments, why are nations and ethnic groups not synonymous? One explanation is that nations are distinguished from ethnic groups precisely because they are less grounded in primordial sentiments, have some notion attached to them of an actual, or ideal, sovereign state, and are more inclusive. States, for instance, have the power to confer citizenship, and open the doors of national membership to individuals regardless of ethnic origin. It could be argued then, that

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<sup>46</sup> Geertz, *Old Societies*, p.109

<sup>47</sup> Geertz, *Old Societies*, p.110.

<sup>48</sup> Hedetoft, *Nations*, p.26.



ethnicity encompasses bonds that cannot be categorized as civic ties. The linkages that exist in the modern era between nations and states are consequently claimed to apply less strictly between ethnic groups and states.<sup>49</sup> Ethnic groups are therefore ‘....essentially **exclusive or ascriptive....**’, while nations are more ‘*inclusive*’ and more ‘...politically defined... [bold and italic emphasis in original].’<sup>50</sup>

The notion of cultural nationalism, however, complicates the issue. Cultural nationalism supposes that some nations are created wholly in the absence of the political concept of the state, as for instance is argued to have been the case in Germany.<sup>51</sup> The use of the term ‘ethnic’ to refer to a group that exists in the absence of a ‘modern’ political identity is consequently somewhat misplaced and simplistic. When cultural nationalism is taken into account, the distinction between ethnicity and nationality becomes harder to define. In this context, ethnicity appears to only make sense as an identity when it is juxtaposed with, and thrown into relief by, a concurrent national identity.

Albanians, for example, are a national, not ‘ethnic’ group when in Albania, but their Albanian identity becomes ethnically defined when they are living in country other than their own, especially if cultural differences are emphasized in an attempt to maintain some form of identity vis-à-vis a larger, dominant group. Similarly, a German, born and living in Germany and of German descent, is considered by himself and others to be of German nationality and the concept of ethnicity may well hold little relevance for him. If the same German moves to the United States and assumes United States citizenship, the concept of ethnicity may become very pertinent. Politically, his nationality may be

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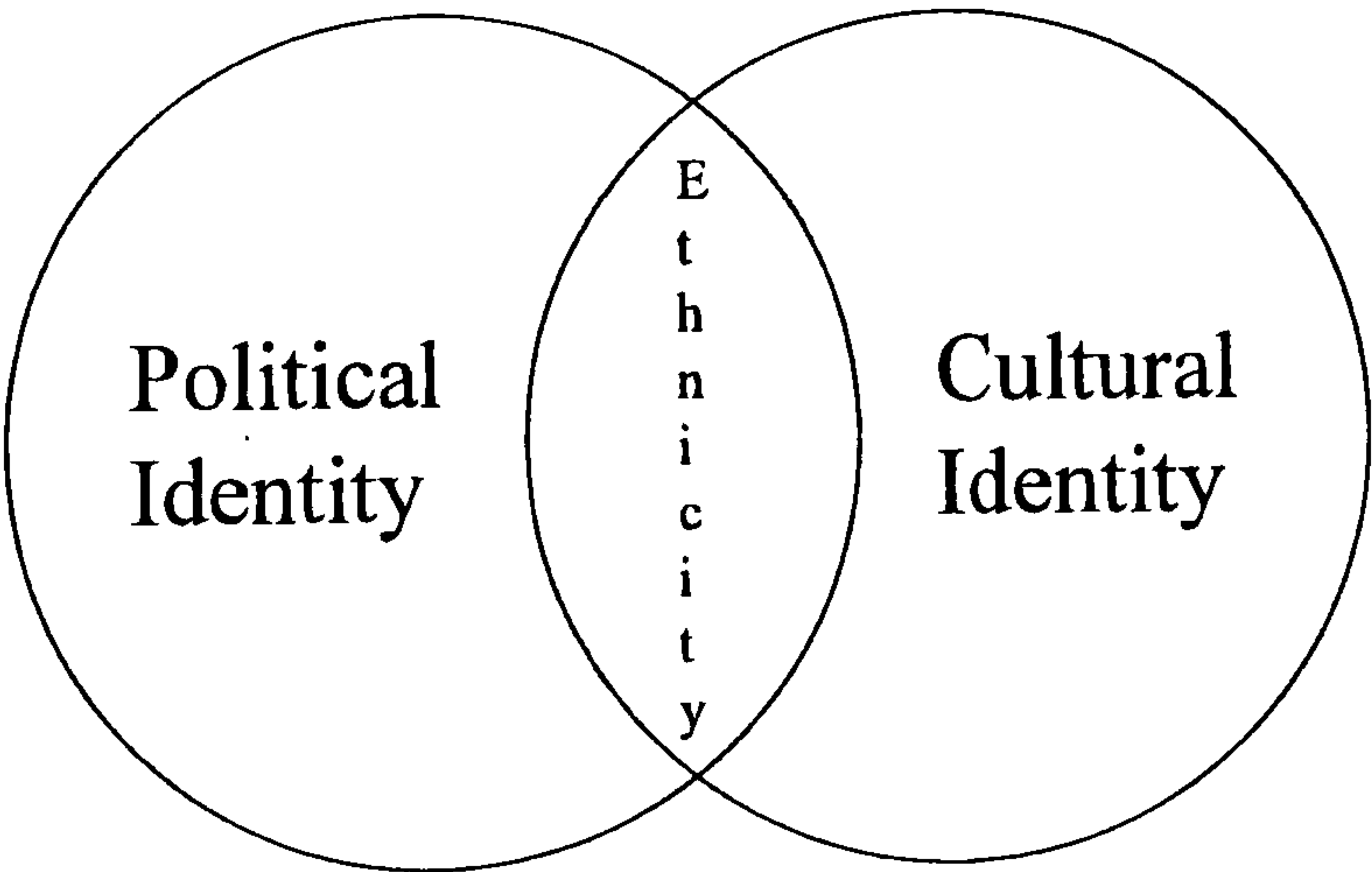
<sup>49</sup> Thomas Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism* (London: Pluto Press, 1993), p.6.

<sup>50</sup> James Kellas, *The Politics of Nationalism and Ethnicity* (Macmillan Press, Ltd. London, 1998, Second Edition), p.5.

<sup>51</sup> See Voigt, p.126.

American, but culturally, distinctions remain, whether these be maintained through personal choice, or be imposed and reinforced externally by others.

Ethnicity therefore appears dependent on an awareness of cultural differences that persist despite the politically inclusive aspects of nationality, and this is especially the case when the culture of a group differs substantially either from the dominant ‘state’ culture, or from that of other groups in the state. Obvious differences between groups, such as skin colour, can heighten the relevance of ethnic identity, but so can the conscious decision to overtly practice distinct cultural or religious customs to emphasize group distinctiveness. Similarly, the downplaying of such customs and practices can blur the distinction between ethnic and national identity. Ethnicity, in other words, is only relevant when cultural identity is juxtaposed with political identity (see Fig. 2), either retrospectively and abstractly (for instance when the term ethnicity is used to describe ‘pre-modern’ societies) or contemporarily and more explicitly (for example when the term refers to cultural differences perceived in a political context, and endowed with significance).



**Figure 2. Ethnicity.**

Debate persists, however, over the relationship between ethnic origins and the development of nations. For the modernists who view nations as wholly modern constructs, no relationship exists between ethnic and national identity other than that invented to legitimize the state. For James Kellas, however, although modern nations do



tend to be politically rather than ethnically defined, ‘....it is often possible to trace the origins of nations and nationalism to ethnic groups and their ethnocentric behaviour.’<sup>52</sup> In other words, while nations may not be ethnically homogeneous today this does not necessarily mean that nations were not originally founded on ethnic bases. This is also the position adopted by Anthony Smith, who writes that while the state apparatus was important in developing national loyalties, its success was heavily dependent on

....earlier assumptions about kingdoms and peoples...and the presence of core ethnic communities around which these states were built up. The process of ethnic fusion...was only possible because of a relatively homogeneous ethnic core.<sup>53</sup>

According to Smith, the civic ties that, once attained, ‘completed’ nations, would never have emerged in the absence of a homogeneous ethnic core.<sup>54</sup> It was only because this core was ethnically homogeneous that it was able to extend bureaucratic incorporation to outlying populations and lay foundations for the ‘civic’ elements of nations, such as ‘compact territory, unified economy, and linguistic and legal standardization.’<sup>55</sup> Just as important, if not more so, to the development of national identity was the ability of this ethnically homogeneous core to disseminate its cultural fund of values and tradition to the rest of the population, so defining ‘a new and wider cultural identity.’<sup>56</sup>

Regardless of the political characteristics often attributed to the nation and the impact on national identity attributed to civic ties, there therefore exists a body of opinion that grounds the origins of nations in ethnic sentiments. Even among those who see a role for ethnicity in the development of nations, opinions differ regarding its perceived primordality. This issue is important because if nations are presumed to be founded on

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<sup>52</sup>Kellas, p.5.

<sup>53</sup> Smith, ‘The Origins of Nations’ *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 12 (3) (1989), pp.352-353.

<sup>54</sup> Smith, ‘Origins’, pp.350-351.

<sup>55</sup> Smith, ‘Origins’, p.351.

ethnic, in other words, primordial, ‘inborn attributes’ or ‘natural values’, but ethnicity itself is not primordial, then the ethnic model becomes severely weakened as an explanation for the development of national identity. To what degree, then, can ethnic sentiments, most commonly categorized as common descent, common culture and common language,<sup>57</sup> be termed primordial?

### *Common Descent*

At one extreme of thinking on the role of descent in ethnicity and nationality is the conviction espoused by Pierre Van den Berghe, who argues that ethnicity has ‘....a substantial measure of biological truth.’<sup>58</sup> Van den Berghe claims that ethnicity cannot be fictitious, because any attempts to create it would be unsuccessful in the absence of common physical attributes and culture, which develop over at least three or four generations of intermarriage. Thus, ‘[e]thnicity or race cannot be invented or imagined out of nothing.’<sup>59</sup> Van den Berghe further argues that the affinity which members of an ethnic group develop for one another are consequently primordial, their origins rooted in nature. Animals, he claims, including humans, naturally prefer to associate with ‘kin over non-kin, and close kin over distant kin’<sup>60</sup> and as such ‘....ethnic and race sentiments are to be understood as an extended and attenuated form of kin selection.’<sup>61</sup>

Van den Berghe’s argument, however, fails to explain why, and how, collectives ever expand beyond ‘kin’ to constitute the inter-mixed societies we know today. Similarly, Van den Berghe gives too little credit to the integrative role that civic ties can play in mixed-origin communities. Moreover, if a race or ethnic group *develops* common

<sup>56</sup> Smith, ‘Origins’, p.350

<sup>57</sup> Fredrik Barth, ‘Introduction’ in Fredrik Barth (ed.) *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (London: George Allen & Unwin; Oslo: Universitets Forlaget, 1970), pp.10-11.

<sup>58</sup> Van den Berghe ‘Does Race Matter?’, p.361.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> Van den Berghe ‘Race and Ethnicity’, p.402.

<sup>61</sup> Van den Berghe ‘Race and Ethnicity’, p.403.



physical attributes and culture through intermarriage, then presumably the latter previously manifested *differing* physical attributes and cultures, yet these differences did not preclude intermarriage from taking place.

It is thus difficult to convincingly argue that biological descent alone determines national identity. If one accepts that theoretically the term ‘nation’ should not apply to the inhabitants of a country like the United States because of their varied origins, then one is forced to ask to which peoples the term could apply? What ‘nation’ can trace unbroken, homogeneous lineage? As Renan writes, there is no pure race, the English, French and Italians being the peoples whose blood is ‘most mingled’ while the concept of a pure German nation is equally flawed, given its Gallic origins in the south, and Slavic roots east of the Elbe.<sup>62</sup>

Occupying a somewhat more moderate ground is Anthony Smith.<sup>63</sup> For Smith, the existence of homogeneous ethnic cores was essential to the development of modern nations, although he concedes that this homogeneity was based on a *belief in* rather than factual, common descent. This belief was founded on common myths, legends, imagery and traditions which were disseminated and perpetuated by a dominant ethnically homogeneous core until they were absorbed by, and integrated, the periphery.<sup>64</sup> However, although Smith emphasizes the importance of ethnicity in the origins of nations, it is difficult to perceive any ‘primordial’ aspects of ethnicity in this perspective; the dominant core is presumably originally created and bound through the dissemination of myths and legends, rather than by factual descent, in the same way in which the core later integrates the periphery.

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<sup>62</sup> Renan, *Poetry*, p.72.

<sup>63</sup> Smith, ‘Origins’, p.353.

<sup>64</sup> Smith, ‘Origins’, pp.352-353.

Llobera and Le Goff also highlight the significance of myths of descent in constructing identity. Llobera writes that the propagation of myths of common ancestry was common in medieval Europe, where increasing use was made in the Sixth and Seventh Centuries of myths of Biblical or Trojan descent to unify disparate peoples under the appealing premise of common, heroic and prestigious descent.<sup>65</sup> From the Twelfth to the Fifteenth Century, Llobera argues, such myths were incorporated into the first chapter of all national histories,<sup>66</sup> prompting Le Goff to conclude that ‘...individuals composing a society almost always feel the need to have ancestors....’<sup>67</sup> This would appear to apply to any society, whether it is termed ethnic or national. As Renan writes, ‘Race, as we historians understand it, is something that is made and unmade.’<sup>68</sup> The very notion of such myths suggests a far more instrumentalist, rather than primordial, relationship between common descent and national identity.

In summary, if one insists that the term nation can only be accurately applied to collectives based on actual common descent, the term becomes so restrictive as to lose most of its usefulness. Moreover, in modern states, the importance of even a *belief* in common descent has largely declined, and the concept of a political community, or common culture, has come to dominate current perceptions of the nation. The question of a political community has been addressed above; what, then, is the role of common culture?

### *Common Culture*

The question of primordiality versus instrumentalism applies, unsurprisingly, to the issue of common culture and its relationship to identity. For Herder, each nation has a

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<sup>65</sup> Llobera, p.27.

<sup>66</sup> Llobera, p.54.

<sup>67</sup> Le Goff, p.10.

<sup>68</sup> Ernest Renan, ‘What is a Nation?’ tr. Iain Hamilton Grant in Stuart Woolf (ed.), Nationalism in Europe, 1815 to the Present: A Reader (London; New York: Routledge, 1996), p.54.



distinctive and innate cultural core, a specific ‘genius’ willed by God that must be preserved, cultivated and, when lost, rediscovered.<sup>69</sup> One is forced to ask, however, why an innate core should ever need preservation (surely a pre-ordained nation could never disappear)? Herder’s perspective also calls into question why a ‘national’ culture should be any more pre-ordained than the many regional, or local cultures that it is often imposed upon.

Max Weber also attributes significance to culture in nation-formation. According to Weber, the origins of nations are closely linked to ‘....the legend of a providential “mission”....’ that usually has roots in the idea of a cultural specificity and superiority over other nations, which must be cultivated and sustained.<sup>70</sup> Of course, the very reference to cultivation implies a more instrumentalist interpretation of culture in nation-building. Indeed, Weber points to the role of intellectuals who, having ‘....special access to special achievements considered to be “culture values”....’ assume leadership of the community and thus ‘....propagate the “national idea....”, just as those elites who have access to political power ‘provoke’ the idea of the state.’<sup>71</sup>

Fredrik Barth also suggests that cultural traditions are not pre-determined by any innate character, arguing instead that they are a reflection of external circumstances and opportunities within which groups develop.<sup>72</sup> These cultural traditions are endowed with significance, and come to act as markers of distinction, or boundaries, between various groups. Barth is referring to ethnic cultures, but it is difficult to see why the same argument should not apply to national cultures.

Gellner adopts a somewhat similar position, differentiating between two types of ‘culture’, High Culture, which is standardized, structured and transmitted by elites

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<sup>69</sup> Kedourie, p.58.

<sup>70</sup> Weber, p.176.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

through education, and Low Culture, or folk culture, unstandardized and transmitted informally during ‘....generally unspecialized activities of life.’<sup>73</sup> According to Gellner, High Culture is disseminated by intellectual elites, usually during the early period of industrialization. Through modern means of communication and resources, High Culture permeates the whole population,<sup>74</sup> overarching previously localized identities that had been based on Low Cultures.<sup>75</sup> A new sense of community is consequently fostered between previously disparate peoples who come to conceptualize themselves and others as part of the same group, relating not just with those intimately known to them, but with ‘....an enormously large number of fellow- members of an anonymous mass society, communicating by means of a literate, abstract High Culture.’<sup>76</sup> Culture, argues Gellner, is therefore not essential to *creating* the nation, but to defining its membership, or rather to determining ‘eligibility’ *in* the nation.<sup>77</sup>

Hedetoft echoes this view of culture, claiming that ‘....culture and identity are in fact completely different concepts...whose *interaction* should not be confused with *equivalence* between them.’<sup>78</sup> While common recognition of a culture may help individuals identify one another as part of a community, this recognition alone does not *make* the community. Moreover, culture must normally be mobilized so that it becomes associated with a particular community.<sup>79</sup>

National cultures are thus not ‘inherent’ in the nation, but can be endowed with significance as markers of national identity, rendering the nation more tangible and allowing members to recognize one another and distinguish themselves from non-

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<sup>72</sup> Barth, *Ethnic Groups*, pp.15-18.

<sup>73</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Encounters with Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), p.26.

<sup>74</sup> Gellner, *Nations* p.55.

<sup>75</sup> Gellner, *Nations*, p.62.

<sup>76</sup> Gellner, *Encounters*, p.41.

<sup>77</sup> Gellner, *Encounters*, pp. vii-viii.

<sup>78</sup> Hedetoft, *Nations*, p. 185.



members. As a repository of a given community's language, art, myths and fables, culture provides an identity framework that pertains to that community, a framework that inevitably influences the creation of new literature and art, and with which new myths and fables usually must harmonize.

Cultural diversity, however, does not preclude the development of national identity, as a national culture can be 'mobilized' and rendered visible even in states with culturally different regions. In this sense, it is the symbolism of culture and the ready access of the population to this symbolism that enable the conceptualization of the nation and national identity.

In the modern era, however, with increasing interaction and the common resonance of much 'pop' culture, there does not appear to be a convincing reason why an 'anonymous mass society' should be inherently or primordially linked to the nation, or limited to the national domain.

### *Common Language*

Richard F.M. Byrn in *National Stereotypes in German Literature* writes that '....the professional linguist knows instinctively that...the key to nationality is language with all its associated habits of mind and particular cultural traditions.'<sup>80</sup> Language, '....including its ways of expressing temporal relations – evolves through the ages, and it is closely linked to the recognition of national identity in the past.'<sup>81</sup>

For Herder and Fichte, language was essential to the identity of a nation and had to be kept pure and free of contamination from foreign words so that it could accurately

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<sup>79</sup> See, for instance, Llobera, pp.56 and 130; Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p.91.

<sup>80</sup> Richard F.M. Byrn, 'National Stereotypes in German Literature' in Forde, Johnson & Murray (eds.) p.137.

<sup>81</sup> Le Goff, p.2.

reflect the historical experiences and character of a particular nation.<sup>82</sup> Similarly, according to Joseph Stalin, while a common language was not in itself sufficient for a nation to exist, a nation was ‘inconceivable’ without it.’<sup>83</sup>

Language has been seen as so closely related to identity that centralizing elites have sought to impose linguistic homogeneity to suppress regional or local identities. The *perception* of such a relationship, however, appears to be more significant than the actual relationship itself. As Colette Beaune describes, in late Medieval France,

....the French language slowly developed into a sacred language with perceived strengths of its own. The mystique that began to surround it eventually led people to affirm – against all reality – that French was spoken throughout the kingdom, that the language coincided with the nation.<sup>84</sup>

Eric Hobsbawm argues that in countries like Italy or Germany, a common language was the *only* marker of nationality, and thus Italian and German bore far more significant connotations for national identity than French.<sup>85</sup> The minimal use of Italian among Italians at the time of unification,<sup>86</sup> however, suggests that the Italian language had to be infused with symbolism before it assumed the role of a marker of identity. In any case, Hobsbawm goes on to write that in most European states language did not constitute an important aspect of national identity until the nationalist movements of the late Nineteenth Century began to emphasize it.<sup>87</sup>

Ernest Renan also questions the relevance of language *per se* in defining nations, claiming that languages are

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<sup>82</sup> See for instance, Robert Reinhold Ergang, Herder and the Foundations of German Nationalism (Columbia University Press, New York, 1931), pp.148-152;. Fichte, pp.56-68.

<sup>83</sup> Joseph Stalin ‘The Nation’ in John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (eds.) Nationalism (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press), p.19.

<sup>84</sup> Beaune, p.267.

<sup>85</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, Nations since 1780 Programme, Myth, Reality (Redwood Press Ltd, Wiltshire, 1990), p.103.

<sup>86</sup> According to Tullio De Mauro, only 2.5 % of Italians spoke Italian in 1860. See Tullio De Mauro, Storia Linguistica dell’Italia Unita, (Bari: 1963), p.41.

<sup>87</sup> Hobsbawm, Nations, p.103.



...historical formations, which give but little indication of the blood of those who speak them and, in any case, cannot enchain human liberty, when there is a question of determining the family with which we unite ourselves for life and death.’<sup>88</sup>

A similar argument is presented by Ulf Hedetoft, who cites the United States and Switzerland as examples of national identities that are not based on a single language. Hedetoft writes that while language can embody distinctions it is possible to be fluent in a language without experiencing any national sentiments, or being included in a nation. Hedetoft argues that language cannot therefore create national unity in the absence of other factors, although it can play a part in disseminating and expressing national identity.<sup>89</sup>

Benedict Anderson also espouses the role of language in carrying and expressing identity, arguing that the advent of print-capitalism and vernacular languages enabled individuals to conceptualize themselves as part of a larger community. Firstly, in disseminating a standardized vernacular language, print allowed individuals who could not understand each other in conversation to do so by means of the written word. Secondly, print and a common language also made possible a common conception of the past, as well as a perception of ‘community’ based on the communication of events and culture in the present. Individuals became aware of the millions of other individuals with whom they shared a language, a past, and a present, but also of the millions with whom they did not, sharpening a sense of commonality among group members and of contrast with non-members.<sup>90</sup>

Language therefore appears to play two main roles in national identity, either as a carrier of the national idea and, when mobilized, as a marker of national difference. In either case, language does not seem to be an inherent, or primordial, aspect of national

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<sup>88</sup> Renan, *Poetry*, pp.74-77.

identity, even though languages are commonly associated with particular nations.

Language as the 'key to nationality', is therefore not convincing. Moreover, print capitalism and the development of mass media technologies such as satellite television or the Internet, mean that the number of individuals who can communicate with one another and share in an 'imagined community' is no longer limited to village, region, *or* nation.

There seems little, therefore, to support the concept that ethnic sentiments in the form of descent, culture, or language are primordial, inborn or innate. The sentiments and attachments of populations are too subject to change,<sup>91</sup> while ethnic mobilization or reawakening are often '....the literal creation, either of new groups which did not previously exist, coalesced around pre-existing cultural resources, or actually of new cultural resources which did not previously exist.'<sup>92</sup>

This argument is echoed by Paul R. Brass, who writes that while certain cultural resources are pre-existing, and can indicate how to best mobilize a group or steer it in new directions, elites in 'ethnic movements' will selectively adopt those aspects of cultural resources that will further the group and its interests as *they* define them. This in turn means that ethnic mobilization along these lines can create an ethnic community that is a '....different social formation from its progenitor.'<sup>93</sup>

The term ethnic homogeneity can thus at most refer to a group that has been integrated through the dissemination of ethnic myths rather than along civic lines, and in this sense ethnicity must be perceived as even more instrumental, and less primordial,

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<sup>89</sup> Hedetoft, *Nations* p. 44.

<sup>90</sup> Anderson, p.47 & p.62.

<sup>91</sup> Jack Eller and Reed Coughlan, 'The poverty of primordialism: the demystification of ethnic attachments', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 16 (2) (1993), pp.187-189.

<sup>92</sup> Eller and Coughlan, 'Primordialism', pp.187-189.

<sup>93</sup> Paul R. Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Competition* (New Delhi: Sage, 1991), p.75.



than a national identity fostered on civic ties. As Brass states, ‘....the study of ethnicity and nationality is in large part the study of politically induced change.’<sup>94</sup>

If neither the state nor ethnicity can define nations or explain their origins, what other aspects have been identified as influential?

## **Territory**

Some perceive the concept of a separate territory a key aspect of the nation. For Smith, the idea of nation ‘....suggests a definite social space, a fairly well demarcated and bounded territory, with which the members identify and to which they feel the belong.’<sup>95</sup>

Territory may even have contributed to demarcating boundaries between peoples who later became nations. As Renan states,

Geography, or what we may call natural frontiers, certainly plays a considerable part in the division of nations. Geography is one of the essential factors of history. Rivers have carried nations forward; mountains have checked them.<sup>96</sup>

However, as Renan also argues, why should some rivers rather than others have created frontiers? Why is the Loire not a border, or the Thames? Renan therefore claims that a people, or nation, are ‘....a spiritual family not a group determined by the configuration of the soil.’<sup>97</sup>

Territory can nonetheless impact national identity as a symbolic, historic homeland worth dying for. Rivers and mountains are not just borders but ‘....places of veneration and exaltation whose inner meaning can be fathomed only by the initiated, that is, the self-aware members of the nation.’<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>94</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> Smith, *National Identity*, p.9.

<sup>96</sup> Renan, *Poetry*, p.79.

<sup>97</sup> Renan, *Poetry*, pp.79-80.

<sup>98</sup> Smith, *National Identity* p.9.

The concept of territory in the context of national identity is therefore similar to the notion of the state, in that while its practical effects can have a direct influence on the development of identity, they are not essential. However, the *idea* of a specific territory or homeland, like the *idea* of a state, usually occupies a significant place in the conceptualization of the nation and national identity, even in the absence of a given population's physical occupation of its 'homeland.'

### Common History

Ulf Hedetoft writes that

....in terms of identity, the meaning of history is not primarily the meaning that one might objectively glean from studying a nation's historical progress, but the interpretation that this nation imposes on its own history - its imagined history of meaning.'<sup>99</sup>

Smith shares this view, writing that for '....many pre-modern peoples the line between myth and history was often blurred or even non-existent.'<sup>100</sup> Historical events are significant not just in an abstract context, but because they are reworked and interpreted into '....myths of political foundation, liberation, migration and election....'<sup>101</sup>

History, or the interpretation of history, therefore encapsulates ethnicity, territory, language and culture in terms of the myths of origin discussed above. Shared historical experiences presented with a certain emphasis to a particular group of individuals contribute to the construction of a political, historical, and cultural environment that binds individuals *because* it is presented to and perceived by them in a similar way. Differences in historical interpretations help to construct a separate consciousness and a specific identity among different 'named populations.'

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<sup>99</sup> Hedetoft, *Nations*, p.180.

<sup>100</sup> Smith, *National Identity*, p.9.

<sup>101</sup> Smith, *National Identity*, p.22.



Flags, national anthems, national celebrations of military victories are thus, at some stage, all new introductions, usually driven by elites to encourage a sense of national unity. French revolutionaries, for example, sought to unify divergent French regions through the introduction of symbolism such as the tricolor flag, the Marseillaise, and emotive female images of France, while in Britain patriotism was embedded in schoolboys through the institutionalized, even ritualized, celebration of historical British military victories.<sup>102</sup> As Llobera writes, '[w]e must be able to account for the consciousness of national identity and the subjective feelings of social communion generated by the participation in acts of national celebration.'<sup>103</sup>

Eric Hobsbawm also attributes an instrumentalist role to history in the construction of national identity. He illustrates the significance of history with reference to the French Third Republic, when primary education ('the secular equivalent of the church'), the invention of public ceremonies and the 'mass production of public monuments' all contributed to the 'invention' of national traditions that reinforced selected aspects of national imagery and 'institutionalized' the French Revolution.<sup>104</sup>

The endowment of the past with present assumptions also contributes to the creation and perpetuation of collective identity, as illustrated by Benedict Anderson's example of Britain and the Magna Carta:

The barons who imposed Magna Carta on John Plantaganet did not speak 'English', and had no conception of themselves as 'Englishmen', but they were firmly defined as early patriots in the classrooms of the United Kingdom 700 years later.<sup>105</sup>

This is not to say that history is always consciously and deliberately manipulated by elites to promote national identity, nor is the role of history in the construction of

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<sup>102</sup> Colley, p.168.

<sup>103</sup> Llobera, p.ix.

<sup>104</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, 'Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914 in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), p.271-272.

identity always based on the distortion or fabrication of fact. Rather, history is endowed with a significance or even symbolism that becomes instantly recognizable to a certain population, and hence forms an essential dimension of their identity.

Nevertheless, Renan writes that '[f]orgetfulness, and I shall even say historical error, form an essential factor in the creation of a nation; and thus it is that the progress of historical studies may often be dangerous to the nationality.'<sup>106</sup> Similarly, Le Goff argues that

[t]o make themselves the master of memory and forgetfulness is one of the great preoccupations of the classes, groups and individuals who have dominated and continue to dominate historical societies. The things forgotten or not mentioned by history reveal these mechanisms for the manipulation of collective memory.<sup>107</sup>

For instance, acts of remembrance introduced by the French Revolution were selective in nature, with bloodless days of the revolution remembered, but not the more violent ones, such as the date of the king's execution. Similarly, the memory of the victims of the Terror that followed the Revolution was not commemorated.<sup>108</sup>

Common history, like territory, language and ethnicity, thus appears to be more significant to national identity in 'mythical' than factual form. While shared sacrifices and glories can give substance to recognizable emblems of identity, the successful and selective creation and dissemination of these symbols at a collective level, conscious or otherwise, enable both a broader conceptualization of national identity, and the reaffirmation of membership in that identity. Glories, dates, battles, heroes and war memorials all have figurative meanings that help to conceptualize the nation, but their resonance also marks membership *in* the nation. Thus we come full circle from the extension of a small community based on a recognition of common symbols, to a larger

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<sup>105</sup> Anderson, p.108.

<sup>106</sup> Renan, *Poetry*, p.66.

<sup>107</sup> Le Goff, p.54.



community based on shared print-languages, which record and disseminate common history to form still wider ‘imagined communities.’ This history in turn becomes a locus for the generation of further myths and symbols, recognizable to given ‘named populations’ that are inspired to continue in the tradition of, and in honour to, the past.

## War

A less philosophical approach to the origins of nations and national identity is espoused by Elie Kedourie who writes: ‘Frontiers are established by power, and maintained by the constant and known readiness to defend them by arms.’<sup>109</sup> It is therefore

....absurd to think that professors of linguistics and collectors of folklore can do the work of statesmen and soldiers...what does happen is that academic enquiries are used by conflicting interests to bolster up their claims, *and their results prevail only to the extent that somebody has the power to make them prevail* [emphasis added].<sup>110</sup>

Renan echoes this sentiment, writing that acts of violence ‘.... have taken place at the commencement of all political formations.... *Unity is ever achieved by brutality* [emphasis added].’<sup>111</sup>

Michael Howard highlights a similar ‘functional’ role, writing that war is critical in determining whether a state can gain or *preserve* its independence and sovereignty.<sup>112</sup> According to this supposition, the division of mankind into some groupings as opposed to others is less the preordained will of God than the result of power struggles and foreign intervention. The practical aspects of the ‘winners and losers’ argument has merit, yet *conquest* alone is insufficient to explain the emergence of particular identities or rather,

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<sup>108</sup> Le Goff, p.86.

<sup>109</sup> Kedourie, p.125.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> Renan, *Poetry*, p.66.

<sup>112</sup> See, for instance, Michael Howard *The Lessons of History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p.41.

the transformation in mentalities that must occur for different peoples to develop a shared identity. Even where borders are decided through warfare, the absence of, or a failure to develop, myths and symbols that have a common resonance among diverse ethnic cores can mean that coercion never evolves into acceptance. As Anthony Richmond states, force and coercion alone are not enough to maintain the unity of a group; brute force must be accompanied by attempts to create a sense of ‘legitimate authority,’ or a dominant group’s resources will eventually be exhausted.<sup>113</sup> Some form of ‘ideology’ must also be disseminated to mobilize support for the use of force both within borders and against external enemies.<sup>114</sup>

For some authors, however, warfare plays an integral role in spreading such an ideology. One perspective is that warfare entails bureaucratic, mobilization and logistical requirements that extend the ‘reach’ of the state, and help to disseminate a sense of ‘nation.’<sup>115</sup> According to Smith, not only does ‘war make the state,’ ‘...it fashions ethnic communities...from the contestants ... [and] even from third parties across whose territories such wars are often conducted.’<sup>116</sup>

A somewhat different explanation of the impact of war on identity is that warfare encourages groups to differentiate themselves from the ‘Others’ with whom they are engaged in conflict. Howard argues that warfare can actually encourage nations to become self-conscious through contrast with ‘Enemies’ or ‘Others’ while the heroic figures and events that emerge from warfare come to form part of national consciousness.<sup>117</sup> In a more specific context, both Colette Beaune and Linda Colley illustrate the influence of warfare and ‘Others’ on French and British national identity

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<sup>113</sup> Anthony Richmond ‘Ethnic Nationalism’, p.5.

<sup>114</sup> Richmond ‘Ethnic Nationalism’, p.6.

<sup>115</sup> See, for instance Smith *Ethnic Origins*, pp.350 and 352.

<sup>116</sup> Smith, *National Identity*, p.27.

<sup>117</sup> Howard *Lessons*, pp. 39-40.



respectively, not just in terms of the mobilization of armies and national symbolism, but in relation to the conscious cultural differentiation that military conflict between the two states encouraged.<sup>118</sup> As Linda Colley argues, '[t]here are few more effective ways of bonding together a highly disparate people than by encouraging it to unite against its own and other outsiders.'<sup>119</sup> Similarly, Beatrice Heuser writes that

Conflicts are possibly the most important contexts in which a feeling of group identity is engendered. War is thus of extreme importance for bonding experiences and for the formation of group identities, as is the experience of a common threat (or oppression etc.)<sup>120</sup>

An alternative, or perhaps complimentary, perspective is that despite its often arbitrary outcomes, warfare can be portrayed and perceived as the very embodiment of God's pre-ordained will, where success is interpreted as confirmation of the righteousness of a nation, of the importance of maintaining an almost sacred national unity, and of the certainty of national destiny. Warfare can consequently contribute to the generation of integrative myths of common ancestry, descent and 'chosenness.' As Anthony Smith writes, in addition to mobilizing ethnic and national sentiments in the present, war can be a '....provider of myths and memories for future generations.'<sup>121</sup> More specifically, Hedetoft argues that much national imagery, including national anthems, flags and heroic figures, stems from, or is related to, war.<sup>122</sup>

One explanation, proffered by Llobera, comes closest to integrating the perspectives outlined above. For Llobera, as new and greater external threats emerge that apply to all the inhabitants of a territory, units of resistance gradually expand beyond the

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<sup>118</sup> Beaune; Colley.

<sup>119</sup> Colley, p.53.

<sup>120</sup> Beatrice Heuser, 'European Strategists and European Identity: The Quest for a European Nuclear Force 1954-1967' *Journal of European Integration History* 1 (2) 1995, p.61.

<sup>121</sup> Smith, *National Identity*, p.27.

<sup>122</sup> Hedetoft, 'Mentalities', p.283.

household to form clans, tribes and so forth.<sup>123</sup> The more success these larger units have in defending against the external threat, the more legitimacy their ruling bodies gain, and the more they become entrenched, whilst failure in warfare often results in their disappearance.<sup>124</sup> Consequently, it may be surmised that if communities are conquered and ruling cores replaced, defence against a new, common, external threat may be required before conquerors and conquered coalesce and develop a broader, shared identity. Llobera's perspective incorporates the 'brutal survival' function of warfare, the concept of 'Enemies', and also of the consequent apparent 'legitimacy' that ensues from successful warfare. This function is similarly outlined by William McNeill, who writes that the '....capacity to repel foreign rivals in war on the strength of domestic resources was one of the two critical criteria of sovereignty, the other being capacity to repress domestic revolt.'<sup>125</sup>

Llobera's and McNeill's explanations, however, also touch upon a distinction between general warfare or conquest and *defence*; it is the need for defence that prompts group integration, successful defence that ensures *preservation*, and successful defence that establishes and *confirms* the legitimacy of ruling elites.

While neither Llobera nor McNeill seek to analytically surface or crystallize the distinction between war and defence, their comments nevertheless suggest that, in terms of military factors, generic warfare alone may be insufficient to explain the origins of a given national identity.

In any case, while the outcomes of war and defence may be interpreted as evidence of primordality or otherwise, their instrumental nature seems apparent. Moreover, there is little to suggest that some of the functions and symbolism of war are

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<sup>123</sup> See Llobera, pp. 8-17.

<sup>124</sup> Llobera, p.119.

<sup>125</sup> McNeill, p.64



inherently limited to the ‘national’ domain. Stuart Woolf, for instance, argues that part of Europe’s common heritage stems from the impact of Napoleon’s conquests, which diffused administrative practices, norms of sociability and collective behaviour, and concepts of civilization including liberty and law that became relatively standardized across French-dominated Europe.<sup>126</sup> Similarly, Jon Davies asserts that a common recognition of ‘war symbolism’ has come to define Europe’s boundaries, and even European identity itself.<sup>127</sup>

### Common Interests and Sameness

If contrast with others engenders a sense of similarity, is it possible that national identity is simply a feeling among a population of being *alike*? Anthony Smith refers to

....a straightforward understanding of the concept of ‘identity’ as ‘sameness’. The members of a particular group are alike in just those respects in which they differ from non-members outside the group. Members dress and eat in similar ways and speak the same language; in all these respects they differ from non-members, who dress, eat and speak in different ways. This pattern of similarity-cum-dissimilarity is one meaning of national ‘identity.’<sup>128</sup>

Taken to extremes, this argument could be linked to Hume’s claim that a nation is ‘....nothing but a collection of individuals....’<sup>129</sup> who through their interaction come to resemble one another, and thus assume a ‘national’ as well as a ‘personal’ character.<sup>130</sup> However these traits are acquired, it would appear that the self-identification of communities who do share traits must be achieved through the identification of

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<sup>126</sup> See Stuart Woolf, ‘The Construction of a European World-View’ *Past and Present* n.137 (November 1992), pp.92-94.

<sup>127</sup> Jon Davies, ‘Reconstructing Enmities; War and War Memorials, the Boundary Markers of the West’ *History of European Ideas* 19 (1-3) (1994), pp.47-52.

<sup>128</sup> Smith, *National Identity*, p. 75.

<sup>129</sup> David Hume, ‘Of National Characters’ in Knud Haakonssen (ed.), *David Hume Political Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.79.

<sup>130</sup> Hume, in Haakonssen (ed.), p.82.

communities who do not. ‘Without such bonds of differentiation’, Smith writes, ‘there can be no nation.’<sup>131</sup>

National identity, as Martin Evans argues, is ‘....produced through a process of negation, the creation of a coherent sense of self through explicit rejections and denials. It is a dynamic relationship, defined through the exclusion of groups deemed not to belong.’<sup>132</sup>

National identity is consequently ‘....neither natural nor stable...While undoubtedly the repository of distinctive collective experiences, it is finally an invention, involving the establishment of opposites and ‘Others’ which are used as yardsticks for self-definition....’<sup>133</sup>

Common interests and sameness also depend upon perceptions. National identity can be encouraged by contrasting images of a foreign or hostile ‘Other,’ in the face of which the impact of national internal differences is vastly reduced. Common interests, however, are insufficient to explain the development of national identity. It is the mobilization of common interests and the *dissemination* of the perception of sameness that foster the development of national identity.

## Religion

If national identity rests on the dissemination of a sense of commonality among individuals, then the role of religion in the early development of common identity should not be overlooked.

Anthony Smith refers to vertical *ethnies* or communities where a vernacular society is bonded by ‘....organized religion and its sacred scriptures...myths of

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<sup>131</sup> Smith, *National Identity* p.84.

<sup>132</sup> Martin Evans, ‘Languages of Racism in Contemporary Europe’ in Jenkins & Sofos (eds.), p.33.

<sup>133</sup> Evans, ‘Languages’ in Jenkins & Sofos (eds.), p.34.



chosenness, sacred texts and scripts' and where 'the prestige of the clergy ...[has] helped to ensure the survival of the traditions of heritage of the community.'<sup>134</sup>

The conscious association between religion and fledgling nations eventually enabled the first expressions of an embryonic national identity. At the behest of the English and French monarchs, for instance, Christian monks wrote the early histories of the English and French nations, in which the latter were portrayed as a people or *nation* chosen by God.<sup>135</sup> In Medieval France, the close association between the monarch and religious symbolism allowed a largely illiterate but devout population to visualize *France*, a prerequisite for eventually perceiving themselves as *French*. As Llobera writes, '[f]or a culture which was essentially non-literary, signs and symbols were the best, in some cases the only, source of access to the idea of nation.'<sup>136</sup> Colette Beaune would agree: 'Only the Church had the means to offer the royal house free dissemination of information across the entire territory, conveying a set of national ideas that themselves were very close to theology or mysticism.'<sup>137</sup>

Moreover, religion was often employed to confirm the legitimacy of ruling elites. The Crusades, for instance, bestowed religious legitimacy upon monarchs, as did Protestant victories over Catholics, and vice versa. Thus, religion, which in essence transcends boundaries, was often harnessed to a nation. For some nations like the English and the French, this association between religion and nation was an important aspect of the conceptualization of the nation. Linda Colley, for example, emphasizes the role of Protestantism in making Britain's wars against France an important aspect of nation-

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<sup>134</sup> Smith, *National Identity* p.62.

<sup>135</sup> See, for instance, Venerable Bede, *Historia gentis Anglorum ecclesiastica / Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People* Edited by Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969); Gregory of Tours *History of the Franks* Translated by Lewis Thorpe (Harmondsworth: Penguin. 1974).

<sup>136</sup> Llobera, p.55.

<sup>137</sup> Beaune, p.321

formation.<sup>138</sup> Victories against Catholic France appeared to *confirm* not just the legitimacy of rulers, but also the superiority of the nation.

Religion as a framework for memory and recollection can therefore aid the early conceptualization of the nation, and form an early repository of the nation's history. Furthermore, religion can facilitate the dissemination of the 'idea' of the nation through its network of imagery, rendering the nation visible and meaningful to populations. When harnessed to a nation, religion can therefore contribute to the nation's conceptualization of its own specificity and / or superiority, despite the same religion being practiced – and serving the same function – in other countries.

The role of religion in maintaining the cohesiveness of national identity has, however, greatly diminished in many states. For authors including Llobera, this role has been replaced by nationalism, which '....tapped into the same reservoir of ideas, symbols and emotions as religion; in other words...religion was metamorphosed into nationalism.'<sup>139</sup>

## **Nationalism**

The question of whether nationalism creates nations or only expresses existing national sentiment goes to the heart of the primordialist versus instrumentalist debate. The analysis of the role of nationalism in national identity is, however, inherently complicated.

As with the term 'nation', debate exists as to what nationalism actually means. Susan Reynolds, for instance, asserts that nationalism is based on the idea that nations are 'objective realities' that have existed continuously throughout history.<sup>140</sup> For Gellner

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<sup>138</sup> Colley, p.368.

<sup>139</sup> Llobera, p.146.

<sup>140</sup> Reynolds, p.251.



(among others), nationalism has connotations of ‘sacralization’ and ‘emotional excess.’<sup>141</sup>

Elie Kedourie defines nationalism as a doctrine that divides mankind into nations on the basis that each has a separate identity best cultivated through the creation of an independent state.<sup>142</sup> John Hutchinson differentiates between cultural and political nationalism, the former extolling the cultural uniqueness and virtues of the nation and the second seeking the creation of an independent state.<sup>143</sup> Jenkins and Sofos also distinguish between two broad types of nationalism. The first has as its objective the attainment of independent state-hood for a designated population; the second is characterized by the attempts of ruling or competing elites within existing states to increase their legitimacy through the creation or recreation of pre-existing real or ‘imagined’ communities.<sup>144</sup>

For Greenfeld, nationalism is a political ideology in which a sovereign ‘people’ functions as the central object of an individual’s identity and loyalty. But, Greenfeld argues, this does not mean that nationalism is necessarily an exclusive doctrine, as ‘people’ could in theory encompass an association of many nations. Greenfeld refers to the United States of America as an example of such a ‘people,’ and goes on to suggest that a nation synonymous with humanity is not a contradiction in terms.<sup>145</sup>

As can be seen from this brief overview, the definitions and understanding of the concept of nationalism vary greatly, from one extreme where distinct nations constitute the natural dividing blocks of the world, to the other, where a nation could in theory constitute all of humanity. Similarly, the degree to which nationalism is a political or cultural programme is a matter for debate, while the extent to which ‘emotional excess’ is a defining characteristic of nationalism depends upon one’s interpretation of the latter.

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<sup>141</sup> Gellner, *Encounters* p.63.

<sup>142</sup> Kedourie, p.67.

<sup>143</sup> Hutchinson, pp.40-57.

<sup>144</sup> Jenkins & Sofos, ‘Nations and Nationalism’ in Jenkins & Sofos (eds.), pp.23-24.

<sup>145</sup> Greenfeld, p.8.

Defining nationalism is further complicated by different conceptions of *when* nationalism is argued to have originated. As discussed above, most modernists perceive nations as mass concepts, and therefore attribute the emergence of nationalism and nations to the mass transmission mechanisms of the modern era.

E.H. Carr, however, sees three phases of nationalism at play; the first in the Middle Ages, when national state formation began to take place in the wake of the Holy Roman Empire; the second from the Napoleonic wars until 1914; and the third from the Nineteenth Century onwards, when Rousseau, whom Carr terms the ‘founder of modern nationalism’, associated the nation with the people instead of the sovereign.<sup>146</sup>

Whether pre-modern identity construction constituted nationalism is largely a question of semantics. It would be difficult, for instance, to prove that monarchs who sought to consolidate their territories and legitimacy held an underlying ‘nationalist’ conviction that nations are inherent and pre-ordained. If, on the other hand, nationalism is perceived to be a political program designed to bolster the state, then, as E.H. Carr writes, nationalism may be said to have existed in the medieval kingdoms of Europe. Similarly, Collete Beaune convincingly argues that national consciousness among elites in monarchical dynasties was not only sufficient for national identity to exist, but that the state was already disseminating this consciousness to a largely illiterate population through religious associations and imagery.<sup>147</sup>

Of course this raises the question of whether nations existed at all in the pre-modern era. It is apparent that for modernists nations cannot have existed before the modern age. According to authors such as Elie Kedourie, Walker Connor, Benedict Anderson and Ernest Gellner, a teleological view of nations existing through time is

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<sup>146</sup> Carr, pp. 2-26

<sup>147</sup> See, for instance, Beaune, pp.15-17.



wholly misplaced;<sup>148</sup> in pre-modern communities, they argue, populations at large did not share the conception of the nation held by aristocratic elites, nor did elites and their subjects perceive a common identity.<sup>149</sup>

Hugh Seton-Watson, on the other hand, draws a distinction between ‘old, continuous’ and ‘new’ nations, in which he sees two very different roles for nationalism and nationalist elites. Seton-Watson argues that in ‘old’ nations like France and England, national identity developed before the doctrine of nationalism, while in ‘new’ nations such as Italy and Germany, national identity and nationalism were cultivated simultaneously by political elites.<sup>150</sup>

Furthermore, a number of exhaustive works on early national identity dispute that nations and national identity only emerged with mass national consciousness and representation. As Smith writes, England and France were perceived as distinct actors on the world stage long before the end of the Nineteenth Century, so the existence of nations, if not of widespread national identity, cannot be purely the product of state mobilization of the masses.<sup>151</sup>

Susan Reynolds also points to the existence of what she calls ‘regnal sentiments’ in the Middle Ages, when, she argues, collective identity was founded on the consciousness of being subjects in a kingdom. Reynolds specifies, however, that the presence of such sentiments did not mean some medieval kingdoms were destined above others to emerge as modern states, nor was the identity in kingdoms that did not survive any less real.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> See for instance, Kedourie, p.69, Walker Connor, ‘When is a Nation?’ *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 13 (1) (1990), p.99-100; Ernest Gellner, *Nations*, pp.48-49.

<sup>149</sup> Hutchinson, *Modern Nationalism*, p.6.

<sup>150</sup> Seton-Watson, pp.7-8.

<sup>151</sup> Smith, *National Identity*, p.60

<sup>152</sup> Reynolds, p.253.

Crucial to these different perspectives is Walker Connor's question, 'When is a nation?'; how many people, in other words, must develop national consciousness before a given population can be termed a nation?<sup>153</sup> Connor, while recognizing the difficulties in pinpointing dates and percentages, retains that national consciousness is a mass, rather than elite phenomenon, and that as such the presence of elites proclaiming the existence of a nation is not sufficient for the nation to exist. One must ask, however, how a conceptualization of the nation can be disseminated to the masses if the nation is not first conceptualized by elites. Once the nation is conceptualized, then a form of national identity- even at the elite level- can surely be said to exist.

In any case, accepting the existence of national identity in the pre-modern era does not necessarily weaken the instrumentalist argument; rather, it strengthens it. Every nation is at some stage new, and just because some nations may have emerged sooner than others does not mean they did so 'naturally', nor that they were preordained to inevitably proceed 'slowly and unconsciously' through history and emerge as modern nations. To imply otherwise is to subscribe to the same rhetoric attributed to elites in new, and 'artificial' nations. As Llobera writes:

Of course, with hindsight from the present we can easily place ourselves in the Middle Ages and adopt teleological arguments concerning the 'eternity' of say France or Spain as states or nations or both. To insist that there is nothing necessary about the persistence of these historical realities is as much anathema to some as it is to say that their geographic, political and cultural meaning has changed over time.<sup>154</sup>

It is therefore the *conceptualization* and *dissemination* of the nation that remain constant over time, not the values or characteristics upon which the former is based, nor the means through which the latter is undertaken. Moreover, dissemination, regardless of

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<sup>153</sup> Connor, 'When is a Nation?', p.99.

<sup>154</sup> Llobera, p.22.



whether it is deemed to constitute nationalism, illustrates the constructed, rather than primordial, nature of national identity.

### CONCLUSION

It should be apparent from the above discussion that no single criterion is sufficient to explain the development of all nations and all national identities. For every argument that culture, language, or ethnicity or any other factor, constitutes the basis of a nation, a counter-argument can be produced. Moreover, rather than being inherent, aspects of national identity appear to be *endowed* with national significance. It seems equally evident, therefore, that the aspects and origins of nations are instrumentalist rather than primordial.

Napoleon once wrote that as “....long as the people are not taught from their earliest years whether they ought to be republicans or royalists, Christians or infidels, the state cannot properly be called a ‘nation.’”<sup>155</sup> Similarly, in seeking to ‘preserve’ German identity, Fichte advocated an entirely new system of education to ‘....establish deeply and indelibly in the hearts of all...the true and all-powerful love of fatherland, the conception of our people as an eternal people’<sup>156</sup> in effect a ‘....moulding of the race by means of the new education.’<sup>157</sup>

If national divisions are preordained, and national identity inescapable, why have elites needed to resort to such methods, and to the development of myths of origin and descent, ‘....the ‘classic’ gestures involved in the making of a national identity....’ in order to endow a ‘....political community of the present...with legitimacy...and

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<sup>155</sup> Kedourie, p.82.

<sup>156</sup> Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Addresses to the German Nation Translated by R.F. Jones and G.H. Turnbull (Chicago; London: Open Court Publishing Company, 1922), p.151.

<sup>157</sup> Fichte, p.24.

cohesion’?<sup>158</sup> Similarly, if nations are unique and inherent, why is there a need for a doctrine of nationalism to bring them into being, to protect and regenerate them?

This chapter consequently concludes that national identity is not primordial, but rather is essentially instrumentalist in nature. Indeed, a review of existing literature suggests that an instrumentalist nature may be the one common and defining characteristic of national identity. This instrumentalism is evident in the *conceptualization* and *dissemination* of the idea of the nation, which appear to occur regardless of the values and attributes upon which this idea is based or the mechanisms or historical eras employed in its dissemination. Furthermore, neither the emergence nor the *preservation* of certain nations is primordial, but rather the result of conflicts the outcomes of which often rest as much on luck as judgment. That successful military ventures seem to *confirm* the primordially of the nation is not indicative of genuine primordialism but rather suggestive of the instrumentalist methods of elites. The myths and symbolism that encourage *reaffirmation* of the worth of, and commitment to, the nation are similarly indicative of the instrumentalist rather than primordialist nature of national identity.

This chapter has reviewed the nature of national identity in a primarily theoretical context. The following chapters adopt a more practical, case study approach to the question of national identity, analyzing the processes of national and European identity construction in three states; Britain, Italy and France. In so doing, the chapters continue to address the first hypothesis of the thesis – that national identity is constructed – but also undertake a more detailed analysis of the second and third hypotheses – that defence plays a critical role in the construction of national mentalities *and* European identities.

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<sup>158</sup> Forde, Johnson & Murray (eds.), p.2.



# **CHAPTER TWO – BRITAIN: MORAL WARRIORS**

## **DEFENCE AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF BRITISH NATIONAL MENTALITY**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter addressed the first central hypothesis of the thesis – that national identity is constructed – through a review of existing literature, concluding that national identity, at least in a theoretical context, is not primordial, or inherent, but rather the result of an instrumental association of values and attributes with a given nation. This chapter addresses the primordial versus instrumentalist debate in a more practical context, examining the origins of aspects of British national identity. In so doing, the chapter also addresses the second hypothesis of the thesis - that defence is instrumental in the construction of identity.

### **British Identity - Considerations**

The following case study is complicated by the multinational nature of the United Kingdom. The four principal nations of the United Kingdom, the English, Scottish, Welsh, and (Northern) Irish, have a far longer history than the United Kingdom itself. A thorough analysis of the relationship between defence and national identity in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland is, however, beyond the scope of this chapter, and would in any case risk sacrificing depth of analysis for breadth. This chapter consequently examines the influence of defence on British national identity primarily through the experiences of England.

This approach is justified not only on the basis of limitations imposed by manageability, but also on the grounds that the concept of ‘British’ identity has been far more interchangeable with the concept of ‘English’ identity than with that of any other British nation. As David Marquand has observed, ‘....you do not need to have mastered

the subtleties of de-construction to see that when ‘Britain’ is said, ‘England’ is generally meant. The myths, the symbols, the iconography are English.’<sup>1</sup>

## ASPECTS OF BRITISH NATIONAL MENTALITY AND THE IMPACT OF DEFENCE

### Greatness and Mission

#### *Moral Primacy*

The foundations for the conceptualization of the English as a specific people were probably most firmly laid with the introduction of Christianity to England in 587 and the tradition of ecclesiastical scholarship that ensued. The early ‘national’ histories compiled by Christian monks such as Gildas (*De Excidio Britanniae*, Sixth Century), and the Venerable Bede (*Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, 731) were instrumental in formulating the idea of the English as a chosen people, based on their particular religious, moral primacy and their special relationship with God.<sup>2</sup> The very term ‘primacy’ is an indication that, from early on, English specificity was entwined with the notion of *superiority*. This superiority was justified not only on the grounds of unsurpassed and uninterrupted loyalty to the faith from its very origins<sup>3</sup>, but also in relation to the apparent ‘inferiority’ of the pagan traditions of England’s Celtic neighbours.<sup>4</sup>

On a practical level, the Christian missionaries who first diffused Christianity in England transcended local differences and encouraged largely illiterate individuals to share a sense of commonality beyond their immediately experienced community.<sup>5</sup>

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1 David Marquand, ‘The Twilight of the British State? Henry Dubb Versus Sceptred Awe’ *Political Quarterly* Vol. 64 (1993), p.216.

2 See, for instance, Ralph A. Griffiths, “‘This Royal Throne of Kings, this Scept’red Isle’”: The English realm and nation in the later Middle Ages *University College of Swansea Inaugural Lecture* (1 November 1993), p.16 and Hugh A. MacDougall, *Racial Myth in English History: Trojans, Teutons and Anglo-Saxons* (Montreal: Harvest House; Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1982), p.9.

3 Griffiths, p.17.

4 See, for instance, M.T. Clanchy, *England and its Rulers: 1066-1272* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), pp.89-90.

5 Clanchy, p.88.



Admittedly, any conceptualization of a national identity probably did not extend beyond relatively elite boundaries.

Early on, however, defence against an external threat played a role in disseminating the conceptualization of the English as a moral people. It was, for instance, in seeking to consolidate his kingdom against the Ninth Century Scandinavian threat that King Alfred of Wessex embarked upon a ‘propaganda war’<sup>6</sup> into which he incorporated a translation of Bede’s *History* from Latin into the vernacular.<sup>7</sup> The myth of English moral primacy was thus rendered accessible to a somewhat broader section of the population.

A converse influence of defence on the myth of morality was manifest in the wake of the Norman conquest of 1066, when defeat was interpreted as evidence of divine retribution for Anglo-Saxon *immorality*.<sup>8</sup> Interestingly, after 1066, Norman historians undertook what has been described as a campaign of propaganda, emphasizing the decadence of the Anglo-Saxon period, and praising the restoration of morality to England by the Norman Conquest.<sup>9</sup> In this manner, the Normans may not have imposed *new* myths of identity as much as they *assumed* the morality myth, presenting the Norman invasion, and hence the Normans themselves, as the instrument through which the people of England could be restored to their true, moral, identity.<sup>10</sup>

English myths of moral primacy, which came to encapsulate Anglo-Saxons and Normans alike, were reinforced in the context of the Hundred Years’ War between

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<sup>6</sup> Alfred P. Smyth, ‘The Emergence of English Identity, 700-1000’ in Alfred P. Smyth (ed.) *Medieval Europeans Studies in Ethnic Identity in Medieval Europe* (Houndmills: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1998), p.25.

<sup>7</sup> Christopher Hibbert, *The Story of England* (London: Phaidon Press Ltd., 1992), p.35.

<sup>8</sup> Antonia Grandsden, ‘Prologues in the Historiography of Twelfth-Century England’ in Daniel Williams (ed.), *England in the Twelfth Century* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1990), p.76

<sup>9</sup> Grandsden in Boydell, pp.78-79

<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, a further unifying myth that followed the Norman conquest was also framed in relation to defence. In his *History*, Monmouth established the mythological descent of the English and Normans from heroic exiles of ancient, prestigious Troy, unifying both peoples in a historical relationship framed in the context of a previously shared defence against Greece. The myth is argued to have had ‘....a marked influence in subduing the social animosities of the Bretons, Anglo-Saxons, and Normans....drawing them together into a single nation.’ See MacDougall, pp. 7-8 and pp. 9-13.



England and France (1337-1453). English victories at battles like Crécy (1346) or Agincourt (1415), where the English were on the defensive and outnumbered by as many as five to one, were presented in popular contemporary songs and poems as evidence of God's divine protection.<sup>11</sup> Such interpretations were not limited to folklore. In 1377, for example, Parliament's Chancellor explicitly declared that 'God would never have honoured this land *in the same way as He did Israel through great victories over their enemies, if it were not that He had chosen it as His heritage* [emphasis added].'<sup>12</sup>

One might remark that the Hundred Years' war was fought on the continental mainland, and not in defence of English territory. However, it will also be remembered that the Hundred Years' War began with an invasion of *English*-held Gascony in 1337. Similarly, the English forces that defeated the French at Agincourt were exhausted and in the process of retreating to Calais (and on to England), when they were intercepted by French forces. Moreover, the English were overwhelmingly outnumbered, and faced the French cavalry with archers, reinforcing the argument that the moral significance of England's victory and its impact on English mentality were intensified by the defensive nature of the engagement.

### *Defence of the Church*

It was not just defence of English lands that encouraged a conceptualization of the English as a moral nation. Defence of the Church was also influential in the association of greatness and moral primacy with the English, particularly in the wake of French support for the rival Pope at Avignon during the Great Schism (1378-1417). England's crusades against the 'anti-pope' in defence of the Rome Papacy strengthened England's religious moral force, prompting the boast that '[t]he most potent royal house of England

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<sup>11</sup> Griffiths, p.18

<sup>12</sup> Griffiths, pp.18-19



has never departed from obedience to the Roman Church but has always fought under it in Christian fashion.’<sup>13</sup>

Despite competition for religious primacy with France that had been ongoing since at least the Fourteenth Century,<sup>14</sup> by the early Sixteenth Century, it appeared that the English monarch was winning the battle for preeminence with God, with the king being referred to as the ‘Christ-child *saviour* of the kingdom’, securing the title ‘*Defender of the Faith*’ in 1521 [emphasis added].<sup>15</sup>

### *Defence of Protestant England against the Catholic Threat*

It is, of course, ironic, that with the break of the English Church from Rome in 1529, the religious morality of the English came to be based not on defence of the Roman church, but on Protestant defence against the Catholic threat, from which England had to be *preserved*. As Linda Colley writes,

God, Britons were encouraged to believe, watched over them with a particular concern. Nothing in their troubled past has escaped His notice or eluded His influence, for they were special. They had a mission, distinctive purpose. *But they also had, this version of history taught them, an unvarying enemy* [emphasis added].<sup>16</sup>

A perception of deliverance, or *providential defence*, from and against the Catholic threat not only appeared to confirm the chosenness and moral superiority of the English people, but also contributed to the *reaffirmation* of this conceptualization of the nation. For example, events such as the foiling of Guy Fawkes’ plot against Parliament in 1605, the Restoration of 1660, the 1688 Glorious Revolution and the securing of the Protestant succession in 1714, were portrayed as ‘providential escapes’ whereby the English people had been preserved from disaster by divine intervention, and were

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<sup>13</sup> Griffiths, p.17.

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Colette Beaune, *The Birth of an Ideology: Myths and Symbols of Nation in Late-Medieval France* tr. Susan Ross Huston (Berkeley; Los Angeles; Oxford: University of California Press, 1991), p.126 & pp.166-171.

<sup>15</sup> See Griffiths, pp.19-20.



commemorated yearly in this context.<sup>17</sup> Annual celebrations for Guy Fawkes were actually instilled by an Act of Parliament requiring public thanks to God for his intervention in defence of Protestant England, so that it might never be forgotten; in effect an example of ‘legislated memory.’<sup>18</sup> Similarly, in the 1690s, references were made to Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *History*, juxtaposing his account of Arthur defending Britain against the Saxons with William of Orange defending England from the Catholic threat.<sup>19</sup> Both the influence and perpetuation of these myths of identity are evident in the 1654 observation of Oliver Cromwell that ‘....the dispensations of the Lord have been as if he has said, thou art my first born, my delight amongst the nations.’<sup>20</sup>

### ***Defence and British Moral Primacy in the Nineteenth Century***

After the 1707 Act of Union between England and Scotland, the growth and success of the *British* Empire facilitated the construction of a British identity based on similar myths of chosenness and supremacy. For many, the growing prosperity of the British Empire, achieved in large part through military means, represented ‘....final and conclusive proof of *Great Britain’s* providential destiny [emphasis added].’<sup>21</sup>

Defence during the Napoleonic wars of the Nineteenth Century, however, was at least equally influential in promoting the conceptualization of the British, as opposed to English, as a great nation based on moral primacy and chosenness. The need for defence against the threat posed by France promoted the dissemination of this conceptualization of British identity to probably more Britons than ever before. In part this was the result of the sheer mobilization of volunteers in defence of the homeland, both in the regular forces

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<sup>16</sup> Linda Colley, *Britons : Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven : Yale University Press, 1992), p.20.

<sup>17</sup> Colley, *Britons*, p.19 .

<sup>18</sup> David Cressy, ‘The Fifth of November Remembered,’ in Roy Porter (ed.), *Myths of the English* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), p.71.

<sup>19</sup> Murray G.H. Pittock, *Inventing and Resisting Britain Cultural Identities in Britain and Ireland 1685-1789* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1997), p.37.

<sup>20</sup> Stephen Haseler, *The English Tribe: Identity, Nation and Europe* (London: Macmillan, 1996), p.20.



and in myriad local militias. Interestingly, between 1790 and 1820, half of all Members of Parliament were engaged in a militia or volunteer force, while the multitude of volunteer forces that sprang up around the country both reflected, and encouraged, a widespread affinity with the military and the qualities it represented.<sup>22</sup>

Additionally, the need to mobilize a spirit of defence and resilience against the threatened French invasion prompted the dissemination of government-sponsored

....patriotic propaganda and ceremonial which could only intensify the already growing sense of Englishness, a conscious identity which was even further enhanced by the taking up of arms, and the spilling of blood, by the English masses in the anti-French cause.<sup>23</sup>

England was consequently cast as ‘...the sole remaining island of belief in a sea of anarchy and sin...God’s agent’ for ‘...punishing the nations for their apostasy.’<sup>24</sup>

Defence against France and the Catholic threat not only sharpened the association between morality and Britain, but successful defence appeared to *confirm* the moral superiority of the British. At the turn of the Nineteenth Century, an article in the paper *The Nineteenth Century* declared; ‘Victory in war is the method by which, in the economy of God’s providence, *the sound nation supersedes the unsound...victory is the crown of moral quality* [emphasis added].’<sup>25</sup>

### ***Moral Warfare***

Defence of Britain thus helped to preserve both the physical nation, and confirm the conceptualization of Britain as a morally superior nation. Overt militarism, however, was not in keeping with the idea of British moral primacy. In this sense too, *defence* was

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<sup>21</sup> Colley, *Britons*, p.368.

<sup>22</sup> Colley, *Britons*, p.184.

<sup>23</sup> Haseler, p.24.

<sup>24</sup> Doug Stuart, “‘For England and For Christ’: The Gospel of Liberation and Subordination in Early Nineteenth Century Southern Africa’ *Journal of Historical Sociology* 6 (4) (December 1993), p.379.

<sup>25</sup> Jeffrey Richards, ‘Popular Imperialism and the Image of the Army in Juvenile Literature’ in John M. MacKenzie (ed.), *Popular Imperialism and the Military 1850-1950* (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 1992), p.86.



an important aspect that enabled the de-conflicting of myths of British morality on the one hand, and the military means that preserved and confirmed the idea of British specificity and superiority on the other. The concept of war in defence of the nation or of national values, in other words, was innately more ‘moral’ than the notion of militaristic offensive warfare, even if in practice there may have been little distinction between the two.

Indeed, Nineteenth Century Britain explicitly sought to avoid identifying itself with overt militarism.<sup>26</sup> War was not portrayed as commercial enterprise conducted for the national interest, but justified as moral crusade in defence of the nation or of its inherent, associated values. War was not to be pursued lightly, but undertaken with heavy heart and only for the highest moral purpose. In the Nineteenth Century, ballads and evangelical works reaffirmed this perception of moral warfare, presenting British campaigns not as vehicles for British advances, but as ‘....a struggle between the advance guard of Christianity and the rebellious tides of heathenism’.<sup>27</sup>

Britain’s conduct of war was similarly framed in moral contexts. The efforts of the Duke of Wellington to control the excesses of his troops, were, for instance, extolled and contrasted to Napoleon’s tolerance of his forces’ immoral behaviour,<sup>28</sup> while Sir Henry Newbolt, described as a ‘myth-maker of extraordinary potency’<sup>29</sup> spoke of war in the absence of hatred, and the preferability of death to the employment of ‘foul’ means, or cruelty.<sup>30</sup> The morality of campaigns was extended to those who participated in them. In

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<sup>26</sup> J.A. Mangan, ‘Duty unto Death: English Masculinity and Militarism in the Age of New Imperialism’ *International Journal of the History of Sport Special Issue Tribal Identities, Nationalism, Europe, Sport*, Vol. 12 (2) (August 1995), p.12.

<sup>27</sup> Anne Summers, ‘Edwardian Militarism’ in Raphael Samuel (ed.) *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British national Identity*, Vol. 1 *History and Politics* (London: Routledge, 1989), p.249.

<sup>28</sup> Iain Pears, ‘The Gentleman and the Hero: Wellington and Napoleon in the Nineteenth Century’ in Porter (ed.), pp.225-226.

<sup>29</sup> J.A. Mangan, ‘“Muscular, Militaristic and Manly”’: The British Middle-Class Hero as Moral Messenger,’ *International Journal of the History of Sport* Vol.13 (1) (March 1996), p.38.

<sup>30</sup> Mangan, ‘Duty unto Death’, p.22.



the newspapers of the mid-Nineteenth Century, for example, private soldiers and superior officers alike were enshrined in an ‘intense aura of sanctity’ that portrayed the former as ‘objects of evangelical sanctity’ and the latter as ‘examples of Christian heroism.’<sup>31</sup> Officers were painted in heroic, but ‘classical and Biblical poses’<sup>32</sup> while the rank and file were portrayed at prayer, virtuous, but also disciplined and tamed by religion.<sup>33</sup>

The myth of British morality, entrenched in large measure in the context of defence, consequently enabled the mitigation of any militaristic overtones that were carried by war. Furthermore, this myth rendered acceptable the pursuit of ‘military virtues’ and their firm association with the British character. The British, in other words, could have ‘....just confidence that our very blood and the ineffaceable character of our race will save us from any mischief that militarism may have brought to others.’<sup>34</sup>

### **Military Virtue**

From the 1860s, such military (yet moral) virtues were actively pursued in a propaganda campaign that has been described as ‘....pervasive, smothering, unrelenting....’<sup>35</sup> Most strikingly, boys’ publications such as *The Boys’ Own Magazine*, *Young England*, and *The Boy’s Journal*, and *British Battles*, emphasized ‘....nobility of character, resourcefulness in fact of adversity or...virtues of magnanimity when dealing with a defeated enemy...pointing up lessons in manners and morals.’<sup>36</sup> In the classroom, the diffusion of appropriate classroom texts aimed to instill the relevant qualities amongst Britain’s youth (particularly the young males at public school destined to become Britain’s leaders). This ‘classical curriculum’ translated into a ‘....constant diet of stories

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<sup>31</sup> Summers, in Samuel (ed.) *Patriotism Vol. 1*, p.248-9.

<sup>32</sup> Colley, *Britons*, p.179.

<sup>33</sup> Joany Hichberger, ‘Old Soldiers’ in Samuel (ed.) *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity Vol. III National Fictions* (London: Routledge, 1989), pp.55-56.

<sup>34</sup> J.A. Cramb quoted in Mangan, ‘Duty unto Death’, p.21.

<sup>35</sup> Mangan, ‘Duty unto Death’, p.18.



of war, empire, bravery and sacrifice for the state' that was further reinforced by compulsory participation in public celebrations of military victories.<sup>37</sup>

*Military Virtue and the Inherence and Continuity of Military Virtues*

The British national character was thus endowed with an inherence belied by the constructed nature of many of the myths that sustained it. Military qualities were presented as being more than just desirable; the virtues extolled were portrayed as genealogically intrinsic (which of course begs the question of why it was necessary to instill them at all).

Nonetheless, the context of defence was instrumental in allowing such myths of English, and later British national identity to take root. In part this was thanks to the extrapolation of continuity from defence in British history, which in turn was associated with a continuity in the English and British national character. Drake and Nelson, for instance, were argued to have demonstrated '....the same glorious self-confidence, the same daring and initiative.'<sup>38</sup> Similarly, Wellington was portrayed not just as the embodiment of military virtue, but as '....the culmination of two millennia of strife, and as the man who finally produced the peace of nations under the benevolence of English supremacy.'<sup>39</sup> The qualities Wellington came to symbolize were '....built into the national consciousness as part of the essential fabric of Englishness.'<sup>40</sup>

Moreover, the appeal to figures like Wellington as symbols of the nation in the context of defence is a common feature of English and British history. At the end of the Sixteenth Century, for example, when the English fleet defended England's shores from

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<sup>36</sup> Alison Light (ed.), with Sally Alexander and Gareth Stedman Jones, Raphael Samuel - Island Stories: Unraveling Britain, Theatres of Memory Vol. II (London: Verso, 1998), p.86.

<sup>37</sup> Colley, Britons, p.168.

<sup>38</sup> C.H.K. Marten, Vice-Provost of Eton, 1905, cited in Raphael Samuel, 'Continuous History,' in Raphael Samuel (ed.), Patriotism Vol. I, p.12.

<sup>39</sup> Pears in Porter (ed.), p.220.

<sup>40</sup> Pears in Porter (ed.), pp.217-218.



the Spanish Armada, Boadicea was ‘resurrected’ as a symbol of national resistance, and endowed with the status of national heroine.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, in the Eighteenth Century, Sir Walter Raleigh recounted the heroic tales of Drake, synonymous with English defence against the Spanish. Even in the Twentieth Century, Wellington, the personification of English defence against France, was exalted as the hero to whom Churchill could be compared.<sup>42</sup>

These accounts were not just for the purpose of popular entertainment; they were intentionally designed to be inspirational, to disseminate the conceptualization of English and British identity based on myths of martial, heroic qualities manifested in defence of the homeland, and to encourage their emulation. As William of Malmesbury claimed in the Twelfth Century; examples of the ‘....bravery and other merits of great men will encourage others to similar behaviour.’<sup>43</sup> These accounts of heroic defence in effect took on a momentum of their own, associating particular attributes with the national character, thus both conceptualizing and disseminating national identity.

One example of ‘inspirational’ literature drawing upon the context of defence is the preface to Sir Walter Raleigh’s *History of the World* in which the understated coolness of the English is personified in Sir Francis Drake’s stance on hearing of the approaching Spanish Armada: ‘The Captains and Commanders were then it seems at Bowls upon the Hoe at Plymouth; and the Tradition goes, that Drake would needs see the Game up, but was soon prevailed to go and play at the Rubbers with the Spaniards.’<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Raphael Samuel, ‘Introduction: The Figures of National Myth’ in Samuel (ed.) *Patriotism, Vol. III*, p.xxiii

<sup>42</sup> Pears in Porter (ed.), p.232.

<sup>43</sup> Grandsden, p.66.

<sup>44</sup> Preface to Sir Walter Raleigh’s *The History of the World, in Five Books* 11<sup>th</sup> edition (London, 1736) cited in Sir Robert Birley, *The Undergrowth of History : Some Traditional Stories of English History Reconsidered* (London: G. Phillip for The Historical Association, 1955),p.11

In time, this account evolved to the more familiar version in which Drake states ‘...there is time to finish the game and beat the Spaniards afterwards’.<sup>45</sup> The inspirational account has Drake calmly poised in a time of crisis – evidently the right man with the right virtues at the helm of England’s defence.

This calm poise is undoubtedly how Drake - and the English character - have been cast, yet had Drake been unsuccessful against the Armada, the incident might instead have cast aspersions the leadership abilities of a man more concerned with finishing a game than with the defence of England. This alternative perspective is well illustrated by a Spanish account of the same event which places a very different emphasis on Drake’s ‘English cool.’ The Spanish account relates the bowling incident as evidence of the English being caught unaware by the Spanish Armada, disdainfully remarking that the Spaniards were able to bring ‘....our Navy to their shores, while their Commanders and Captains were at bowles’.<sup>46</sup>

A careful interpretation of history thus reinforced both the desirability of qualities such as bravery, resolve stamina, and calmness under pressure, and their essential ‘Englishness’ and ‘Britishness’. Once identified, these virtues were a useful instrument for the rallying of national pride. John Hawkins, for example, declared just such a purpose for his *Discourse on the National Excellencies of England*, in which he explicitly and deliberately focused on the heroism and war-spirit of the English.<sup>47</sup>

### *Two ‘National’ World Wars*

The fact that one and a half million British men volunteered for service in the first two years of World War One has been cited as evidence of a British militaristic mentality

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<sup>45</sup> Birley, p.13.

<sup>46</sup> Birley, p.12

<sup>47</sup> Peter Furtado, ‘National Pride in seventeenth-century England,’ in Samuel (ed.) *Patriotism Vol. I*, p.44.



that was quite distinct from continental perspectives on the military.<sup>48</sup> A somewhat different argument could be formulated, however, that the British response to the World Wars of the Twentieth Century was the culmination of a tradition of myths that had centered on, and promoted, the spirit of *defence*, not just militarism. Entry into the First World War, for example, was justified primarily on the grounds of a moral obligation to come to the defence of Belgium.<sup>49</sup> The factual basis of this justification is less significant to the study at hand than the fact that defence was the justification of choice.

The influence of defence on British national mentality was yet more profound in the context of the Second World War, when the civilian population of Britain, subjected to direct attacks from the air, participated in the defence of the country. The ‘Spirit of the Blitz’ became part of the ‘myth’ of British identity through which the conceptualization of the British as stoic and stalwart was disseminated.

Indeed, the ‘myth-making’ industry of the Second World War<sup>50</sup> embedded the spirit of resilience and defence to such an extent that it came to epitomize, rather than just encourage, a particular conception of the British national character. Defence during the Second World War, in other words, enabled the British people as a whole to manifest, share in, and confirm, existing conceptualizations of British identity that had thus far been *represented* by figures like Arthur, Drake, Nelson and Wellington. In the context of defence, then, the British *people* came to constitute a part of their own national symbolism.

Moreover, during the course of both the First and Second World Wars, the sacrifices endured for defence of one’s country *and for the values associated with it* reaffirmed the idea of the worth of both the nation and the values it represented. This

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<sup>48</sup> Mangan, ‘Duty unto Death’, p.14.

<sup>49</sup> Pears in Porter (ed.), p.232.

<sup>50</sup> Haseler, p.55.

reaffirmation was diffused in newspapers, churches, and new acts of public commemoration, as part of a ‘....deliberate construction of remembrance....’<sup>51</sup> As many as 40,000 memorials to the First World War alone were erected in Britain.<sup>52</sup> In part, the reaffirmation of the national worth through remembrance was also employed to emphasize the moral imperative not to betray heroic sacrifices,<sup>53</sup> and to urge citizens to work towards ‘political and social unity’ at a time when the potential for class unrest and disruption was dramatically on the rise.<sup>54</sup>

### **Freedom**

It should perhaps not be surprising that in a nation whose formative history was entwined with defence against the threats of invasion and conquest, freedom should come to occupy a prominent role in national mentality. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles, for instance, provide early references to the ‘domination’ of the Saxons by the Danes, and their subsequent ‘liberation’ by King Alfred.<sup>55</sup> The chronicles similarly allude to ‘oppression’ by foreigners after the Norman Conquest, and tell of acts of resistance by English freemen lying in ambush against the Normans (accounts that were later related in the myth of Robin Hood).<sup>56</sup>

Defence against France during the Hundred Years’ War further encouraged the ingraining of freedom as a national value and attribute. Defence against France fostered the consolidation of the Anglo-Norman elites, and freedom became an English value defined by the threat of France, as opposed to an Anglo-Saxon right usurped by the Normans.

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<sup>51</sup> Bob Bushaway, ‘Name upon Name: The Great War and Remembrance’ in Porter (ed.), pp.151-157.

<sup>52</sup> According to the Imperial War Museum Inventory estimate quoted in K.S. Inglis, ‘The Homecoming: The War Memorial Movement in Cambridge, England’ *Journal of Contemporary History* 27 (4) (1992), p.585.

<sup>53</sup> Bushaway in Porter (ed.), pp.151-157.

<sup>54</sup> Bushaway in Porter (ed.), p.160.

<sup>55</sup> Smyth ‘English Identity’ in Smyth (ed.), p.43.



Writing in the late middle-ages, for instance, Sir John Fortescue favourably compared the situation of the English people to that of the French who, he claimed, were oppressed by their King, forced to provide for his troops and horses, obliged to pay taxes and dues and banned from using salt.<sup>57</sup> England, Fortescue declared, was vastly superior to France, and the English people far better off because of the greater freedoms they enjoyed under England's system of government.<sup>58</sup>

### ***Freedom: Rights v Privileges***

From the Seventeenth Century onwards in particular, the defence of freedom became an internally contested affair, appropriated by radicals and conservatives alike in the pursuit of their political agendas. Between 1647 and 1650, for example, the 'Norman Yoke' of oppression was part of the imagery adopted by the Levellers in their campaign for popular sovereignty, individual liberties and parliamentary reform. England, it was argued, had had an ancient constitution of Germanic origins that enshrined the rights of all Englishmen but which had been overthrown by the Norman Conquest of 1066.<sup>59</sup> The concept of an ancient constitution, however, also supported the conservatives' interpretation of the continuity of institutions, which in essence safeguarded the liberties, or privileges, of the aristocrats, government and the crown.<sup>60</sup>

### ***Freedom: Britain v France***

With the advent of the French Revolution in 1789, the custody battle over freedom returned to the international arena, and became again the ideological focus of conflict between Britain and France, each claiming to be the home and champion of liberty. The

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<sup>56</sup> Clanchy, pp.44-45

<sup>57</sup> Sir John Fortescue, Sir John Fortescue's Commendation of the Laws of England tr. Grigor (London: Sweet and Maxwell Ltd., 1917), pp.26-27

Fortescue, p.56.

<sup>58</sup> Fortescue, p.56.

<sup>59</sup> Haseler, p.33.

<sup>60</sup> Samuel in Samuel (ed.) Vol. III, p.xxxii

French Revolution had claimed liberty as a founding principle, and France was marching through Europe under freedom's banner. The French version of freedom, however, with its notion of individual liberties and rights, threatened the stability of the existing British political and social system, and raised the specter of 'subversive ideas' that would challenge the status-quo and undermine the position of Britain's governing elites.<sup>61</sup> It was consequently necessary to demonstrate the 'fraudulence' of France's liberty, and to 'reveal' it as a misleading temptation which could only lead to chaos and disorder, unlike the real, and implicitly superior, freedom that was England's 'political tradition.'<sup>62</sup>

A barrage of 'conservative propaganda' ensued with the aim of persuading the public of the superiority of British institutions.<sup>63</sup> Newspaper caricatures denigrated the French in contrast with the English<sup>64</sup> and popular contemporary jingles exalted inherent British freedom and warned against the treachery of France.<sup>65</sup>

The perception of freedom as a British national value was thus 'assiduously promoted' in literature and newspapers, until it became a given that Britain had a '...."calling"; a divine mandate which demanded action and which would brook no interference from more earthly powers....'<sup>66</sup> This propaganda even influenced the arts. English gardens were adorned with statues of 'champions of liberty,' famous for their defence of Britain from external and internal threats.<sup>67</sup> King Alfred in particular was cast as the founder and guardian of English liberty, and his era praised in contrast to the years of the 'Norman Yoke' that followed.<sup>68</sup> Landscaping was itself designed to reflect a

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<sup>61</sup> Haseler, p.20.

<sup>62</sup> Jeannine Sural, 'John Bull' in Samuel (ed.), *Vol. III*, pp.17-18

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> See, for instance, Madge Dressler, 'Britannia,' in Samuel (ed.) *Patriotism: Vol. III*, p.38.

<sup>66</sup> James Walvin, 'Freedom and Slavery and the Shaping of Victorian Britain,' *Slavery & Abolition* Vol. 15 (2) (August 1994), p.256.

<sup>67</sup> Jill Franklin 'The liberty of the park' in Samuel (ed.), *Patriotism: Vol. III*, pp.141-142.

<sup>68</sup> Franklin in Samuel (ed.), *Patriotism: Vol. III* p.145 and p.150.



contrast between English freedom and French autocracy; harsh, straight lines or visible fences that might represent control and regimentation were to be avoided at all costs.<sup>69</sup>

Defence against France, both in terms of the conventional military, but also political threat she posed to Britain, consequently encouraged a greater dissemination of the conceptualization of a British identity based on freedom. Concurrently, much of the symbolism utilized in this dissemination stemmed from a historical context of defence.

Freedom thus became increasingly portrayed as an inherently British trait, to be defended and preserved not just in Britain, but throughout the world. One Nineteenth Century broadsheet, for instance, emphasized that whenever England went to war it did so to reclaim the rights of nations that had been encroached upon by tyrants: ‘All nations, having at some stage succumbed to French wiles, now looked to Britain for deliverance.’<sup>70</sup> Similarly, Wellington was presented as the ‘liberator’ of nations that the French had oppressed, while Britain’s campaign to end slavery became part of the general imagery of Britain’s ‘....moral crusade in favour of freedom....’<sup>71</sup>

It could even be argued that after the union of the English and Scottish thrones in 1603, English freedom became British freedom in the context of its exportation and defence overseas. Defence of Britain and of British values thus provided both contemporary *and* historical contexts for the association of the British national character with the ‘inherent’ attribute of freedom.

## Democracy

In 1753, a contemporary observer described how he was

‘[....]convinced that the constitution of no country is as little known as that of England, half the world imagine that all government is confusion with us; and

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<sup>69</sup> Franklin in Samuel (ed.), *Patriotism: Vol. III* p.145 and p.155.

<sup>70</sup> Stella Cottrell, ‘The Devil on Two Sticks,’ in Samuel *Patriotism Vol. I*, p.270.

<sup>71</sup> Walvin, p.256.

the other half that our kings are as arbitrary as any other, and that all they do in a view to satisfy the nation is pure grimace.’<sup>72</sup>

Yet, despite this disparaging remark to the contrary, a belief in the superiority of English and later British institutions became part of the conceptualization of English and British national identity. Democracy and good government became instituted as *inherent attributes* of the nation, and laws and institutions were portrayed as ‘organic’ and continuous even in medieval historiography.<sup>73</sup>

Democracy may not have been born in the context of defence, but the context of defence greatly contributed to its elevation in national mentality. During the Hundred Years’ War, for example, the notion of good government in England was juxtaposed with the inequitable government of France, much like British freedoms were exalted in contrast to the French enemy.<sup>74</sup>

Just as England claimed specificity through moral superiority in the context of its defence of the Faith, so did England claim specificity on the basis of a superior form of government that needed to be preserved and defended, both in practice and as a model or ideal. For example, in the Fifteenth Century, (and again in the context of the threat posed by France), Sir John Fortescue praised the antiquity of England’s institutions and declared; ‘.... there is no pretence to say, or insinuate to the contrary, but that the laws and customs of *England* are not only *good*, but the *very best*.’<sup>75</sup>

During the English Civil War (1645-49), good government, and more specifically democracy, came under threat not from without, but from within. In the course of their power struggle with the supporters of Charles II, English Parliamentarians mobilized

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<sup>72</sup> Joseph Yorke cited in Jeremy Black, *America or Europe? British Foreign Policy, 1739-63* (London: UCL Press, 1998), p.103.

<sup>73</sup> Rees Davies, ‘Issues and Agendas: The English State and the “Celtic” Peoples 1100-1400,’ *Journal of Historical Sociology* Vol.6 (1) (March 1993), pp.1-2.

<sup>74</sup> Fortescue, p.56.

<sup>75</sup> Fortescue, pp..26-27



democracy as a value that needed to be defended from the encroachment of the Crown, citing ‘evidence’ of Britain’s tradition of democracy. The Magna Carta in particular was endowed with symbolism as an icon of the English democracy that had to be defended,<sup>76</sup> even though the barons who had forced its signature in 1215 had been acting on their own behalf and not as part of a quest for popular democracy.<sup>77</sup>

After the French Revolution of 1789, defence against *external* rather than *internal* threats became once again the dominant theme, and democracy, like freedom, essentially became a contested value that was mobilized in conflict with France and consequently gained increased prominence in the conceptualization of British identity. Moreover, for some, the threat posed to Britain by Revolutionary France was *political* and *ideological* as well as military. The political ideals espoused by the French Revolution were in many ways in direct conflict with those of the British establishment; advocates of the former proclaimed the rights of man and the need for direct popular sovereignty, while proponents of the latter adhered to the Whig ‘liberal’ view epitomized by Edmund Burke and hailed the virtue of democracy tempered with order, institutional supremacy and Parliamentary, not popular, sovereignty.<sup>78</sup>

From the French Revolution onwards, therefore, lessons were portrayed from history that revealed evidence of ‘....God’s providential protection of the British nation....’ in the form of the preservation of Britain *and its institutions* from the revolutions that swept France in 1789 and the wider continent in 1830 and 1848.<sup>79</sup> The evils and instability of the Continent were juxtaposed with the peace and tranquility enjoyed by Britain, a stability that was linked to Britain’s unique organic democracy.

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<sup>76</sup> Clanchy, p.195.

<sup>77</sup> Clanchy, p.196.

<sup>78</sup> See J. Hampden Jackson, ‘Tom Paine and the Rights of Man’ in David Thomson ed. Political Ideas (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1990), pp.108-119.

Key events were thus identified and presented as consequential steps in the almost pre-destined and always peaceful democratic progression of Britain. Britain's civil society was a '....a majestic river, flowing in a uniform direction....' a river which required no great formal direction to attain perfection, but only the freedom to run its natural course in the context of the 'informal' conventions of Britain's 'liberty-loving' political class.<sup>80</sup> This political class had '....learned the mysteries of this kind of statecraft ...[and had] known instinctively when to resist and when to accommodate; when to administer the appropriate rectification to the banks and when to leave the river alone.'<sup>81</sup>

Unlike in France, the progress of democracy in Britain had not required any conflict or upheaval (ignoring for a moment the matter of the Civil War), because democracy itself had always been latent in the British character. The Magna Carta, the Petition of Rights in 1628, the Declaration of Rights in 1688, were all argued to have been instituted by men '....guided by the same practical wisdom, the same desire to avoid abstract questions, and to deal with proved abuses.'<sup>82</sup> Good government, in other words, was guaranteed because it was inherent in the British character (or at least in that of Britain's political class) and depended upon qualities of reason and judgment that had existed among ancient generations and been passed down through the ages. Inherence was continuity.

Moreover, England had been able to develop its own institutions like a 'peaceful garden,' free from 'foreign influence' (thanks to successful defence); the English had hence been able to work out their own institutions, government and 'civilization' by

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<sup>79</sup> John Wolfe, 'Evangelicalism in mid-nineteenth-century England' in Samuel (ed.) Patriotism: Vol. I, p.188.

<sup>80</sup> Marquand, p.213.

<sup>81</sup> Marquand, p.213.



*themselves*.<sup>83</sup> Freedom from foreign interference and upheaval had allowed this institutional, civilizational development to be a linear and consistent process, a characteristic that accentuated the notion of continuity but also reinforced perceived contrasts with the continental experience.

Successful military defence against France, particularly after the invasion scare of 1805, helped to confirm this conceptualization of an institutionally superior Britain. The real commitment of Britain to democracy, however, remained questionable. As late as 1866, for instance, Robert Lowe M.P. declared that the introduction of real popular democracy would be disastrous in its enfranchisement of the ignorant, risking the destruction of leadership and the undermining of national unity.<sup>84</sup> It has been argued, therefore, that the gradual extension of political representation to the broader population was not the result of a particular vocation for democracy but rather to placate the population and diffuse class in order to *defend* Britain, or at least its ruling classes, from the upheavals underway in continental Europe.<sup>85</sup> Nonetheless, this more cynical interpretation of Britain's political history has certainly been outshone by the myth of democracy as an inherently British characteristic.<sup>86</sup>

## Independence

Defence was also significant in influencing a conceptualization of Britain as distinct and separate from continental Europe. This distinction was, and perhaps is, best epitomized by prominence of 'island status' as an aspect of national mentality.

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<sup>82</sup> C.H.K. Marten, Vice-Provost of Eton, 1905, cited in Samuel, 'Continuous History' in Samuel (ed.). *Patriotism: Vol. I*, p.12.

<sup>83</sup> See David Lowenthal, 'British National Identity and the English Landscape' *Rural History* Vol.2 (2) (1991), p.214.

<sup>84</sup> Paul Cartledge, 'Ancient Greeks and Modern Britons' *History Today* (April 1994), pp.29-30.

<sup>85</sup> Cartledge, p.30.

<sup>86</sup> Marquand, p.221.

*England*

One of the earliest examples of the influence of defence on this conceptualization is the description by an anonymous author in 1265 of the sea as England's wall.<sup>87</sup> Interestingly, however, there is some evidence to suggest that at least until the early Fourteenth Century, considerations of defence were shaping an alternative perception of England's island status. For example, Higden, in his history of Britain (1327) reflected on the problems of 'insularity' imposed on Britain by the sea,<sup>88</sup> while as late as the Fifteenth Century, Sir John Fortescue portrayed the sea as a *barrier* towards obtaining assistance from overseas, an obstacle separating England from the continent, rather than protecting her.<sup>89</sup>

Nonetheless, from the mid-Fourteenth Century, and particularly as a result of the naval victory of King Edward III at Sluys in 1340, '....a more muscular attitude towards the seas round England was common, and it was this that observers associated with the peculiarity and the superiority of the English nation.'<sup>90</sup> It was after this victory that English monarchs were referred to as 'Kings of the Seas'; tellingly, in 1344 a new coinage was minted displaying the king in full armour on a ship.<sup>91</sup> Successful defence in the context of the sea consequently contributed to entwining England's superiority with her status as an island, and to entrenching this island status as part of the conceptualization of national identity.

During the Elizabethan era, defence against the Spanish Armada further enshrined the conceptualization of England as an island (even though, of course, *England* was nothing of the sort). In Tudor arts and literature, for instance, England was portrayed as

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<sup>87</sup> Clanchy, p.244.

<sup>88</sup> Brown, 'Britain' in Smyth (ed.), p.108.

<sup>89</sup> Griffiths, p.13.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*



‘...an enclosed garden walled off from its enemies’<sup>92</sup> while a contemporary portrait of the ‘Virgin Queen’ represented Elizabeth and England as symbiotic entities, two islands both *resisting* “foreign bodies.”<sup>93</sup>

### ***Britain***

The Act of Union between England and Scotland in 1707 served only to entrench the significance of island status in conceptualizing British identity. It can be argued, for example, that in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries, England’s external borders had been far from definitive, and the Channel had not been perceived as a natural demarcation preventing England’s territorial boundaries from extending into France. Similarly, in the middle of the Thirteenth Century, England was ‘....only beginning to be distinguished in the mind of the king from his overseas lands.’<sup>94</sup> Furthermore, the internal borders between England and Scotland prevented the sea from assuming the character of a primordial and unique border. After the Act of Union in 1707, however, the notion of the sea as Britain’s natural boundary took on a more profound, psychological significance; *Britain’s* (defensive) boundaries appeared ‘....clear, incontrovertible, apparently pre-ordained.’<sup>95</sup>

Moreover, in the Nineteenth Century, Britain’s conflicts with France enhanced the significance of the sea for Britain, and encouraged the promotion of a ‘comprehensively archipelagic vision’ of Britain as a ‘....single political unit that presented common problems of defence....’<sup>96</sup> More symbolically, the sea was endowed

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<sup>92</sup> Peter Stallybrass, ‘Time, space and unity: the symbolic discourse of the Faerie Queene’ in Samuel (ed.), Vol. III p.204.

<sup>93</sup> Stallybrass in Samuel (ed.), Vol. III p.204.

<sup>94</sup> Clanchy, p.257.

<sup>95</sup> Colley, *Britons*, p.17.

<sup>96</sup> David Armitage, ‘Making the Empire British: Scotland in the Atlantic World 1542-1707’ *Past & Present* (155) (May 1997), p.41.

with a stronger defensive and protective aura, through which Britain became an even more ‘.... splendid, isolated island, cut off from continental troubles....’<sup>97</sup>

The successes of the Royal Navy appeared to confirm the perception of England as a sea-faring island nation and maritime power, and naval heroes became increasingly prominent, replacing continental ones in British politics and public culture.<sup>98</sup> Indeed, growing domestic support for ‘sea wars’, rather than continental engagements ‘....reflected not simply a view on defensive and offensive strategy, but also a sense of identity...’; as an article in *Old England* declared in 1751, the sea was Britain’s “proper element.”<sup>99</sup>

Yet the emphasis on ‘island-status’ in British national mentality must derive from non-geographical factors also. After all, island status has not prevented Copenhagen from being the capital of Denmark. In this context too, defence appears to be integral. Despite Britain’s global involvements, Britain’s history is punctuated with imagery of ‘standing alone’; as the sole defender of the rightful Pope; as the Protestant country under siege in a Catholic Europe; as a defensive island in the ‘sea of anarchy’ during the Napoleonic wars; as the last bastion of, and haven for, freedom and democracy in contrast to autocratic Europe; and perhaps most significantly, standing alone during the Second World War as others capitulated or were conquered.

Indeed, the impact of defence in shaping a British mentality based in large part on specificity from continental Europe is best surmised by Britain’s approach to the European Economic Community in the 1960s, explored in depth Chapter Four of this thesis. Not only did supranational integration seem irrelevant to a nation that had proven

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<sup>97</sup> Haseler, p.24.

<sup>98</sup> Black, pp.155-161.

<sup>99</sup> Black, p.172.



eminently successful in defending its own sovereignty;<sup>100</sup> but the prospect of integration seemed to go against all Britain's historical experiences, and consequently, instincts.

This perspective was exemplified by Hugh Gaitskell who, during his anti-EEC campaign, appealed to the heroic memories of Vimy Ridge and Gallipoli,<sup>101</sup> and raised the specter of the end of a thousand years of Britain's *independent* history.<sup>102</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Myths of specificity and superiority, linked to the notions of morality, martial virtue, freedom and democracy, were important aspects of the conceptualization of national mentality in England and Britain. While this conceptualization may have portrayed the notion of a primordial, chosen nation, national identity in England and Britain was not inherent, but rather disseminated by ecclesiastical, monarchical, governmental, cultural and educational elites. As Steven Haseler writes,

....the role of the writing and arguing classes was crucial: for they performed no less a role than that of creating and producing the images...that helped define and describe the new national identity – the idea of Englishness. Indeed...they may have created it.<sup>103</sup>

Elites, in other words, consciously or otherwise, selected values and attributes that were projected as national traits, inspired emulation, and over time became established.

Defence, moreover, was critical in the mobilization of these traits. That is not to say that myths of specificity were always *born* in the context of defence, but the presence of, and need to defend against, internal and external threats elevated the visibility and resonance of certain traits and values in the conceptualization of identity. The need to prepare or mobilize the population for defence also encouraged the dissemination of the conceptualization of national identity; traits like moral primacy or freedom were

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<sup>100</sup> Reynolds, p.227.

<sup>101</sup> Haseler, p.53.

<sup>102</sup> Edwin Jones, The English Nation: The Great Myth (Sutton: Stroud, 1998), p.24.

promoted to center stage in the context of conflict and became as much the object of national defence as the nation itself.

As preservation of the nation and national values were entwined, the nation and its values became more and more synonymous. Successful defence, or preservation, in turn seemed to confirm myths of English and British identity, while the imagery of defence and sacrifice contributed to the reaffirmation of the nation, its values, and their worth. In the case of Britain, defence and the construction of national identity were inextricably linked.

A brief overview of some British historical figures discussed above underscores the prominence of a defensive context. Boadicea, for example, was transformed in popular portrayal from a descendent of the Celtae tribes that had colonized Britain from the late Fifth Century B.C. to a figure of early Briton *resistance* against the invading Romans. Similarly, King Arthur was essentially a descendent of the conquering Romans, but became legendary as the heroic British King, *defending* Britain against foreign invaders. King Alfred of Wessex came to power (and to resonance as a legendary figure) in the context of defence against the Scandinavian threat of the Ninth Century. And, King Harold, a *Saxon*, is a firmly embedded figure of *English* history by virtue of his (unsuccessful) *defence* against the conquering Normans at the infamous Battle of Hastings in 1066.

Defence, as both a contemporary imperative, and a historical context, was thus profoundly influential in entrenching certain values and attributes with the English and British national character, and in reinforcing the idea of Britain as a specific and superior nation. Moreover, successful defence was particularly significant in encouraging a sense

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<sup>103</sup> Haseler, p.26.



of freedom from ‘foreign influence’, so enabling Britain’s ‘national attributes’ to appear even more specific, distinct and inherent.

One might argue, however, that the existence of myths of identity does not necessarily prove that they have permeated national consciousness, or that they have a bearing on national identity. The following chapter therefore assesses the resonance of these myths in British national mentality through a historical case study of national identity in Britain from 1960-February 1963.

# CHAPTER THREE – BRITISH NATIONAL MENTALITY, FEBRUARY 1960-FEBRUARY 1963: SELF-PERCEPTIONS AND THE CHALLENGES OF REALITY

## INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter argued that defence, both through practical consequences and symbolic associations, heavily influenced the construction of English and later British identity. The perception of a pre-ordained national specificity and superiority was seemingly confirmed in the context of successful defence, while the act of defence ensured the preservation of a country whose identity became increasingly entwined with defence itself.

In the two decades following the end of the Second World War, however, British identity came under increasing pressure from a series of events that conflicted with deeply-seated convictions concerning Britain's world role. Among these events were the departure of Winston Churchill in 1955 (a symbol of British strength and leadership), the failure of the Anglo-French Suez expedition in 1956 (which provided a stark awakening to the limits of British post-war power and influence), the last phase of decolonisation marked by the independence of Malaya and Ghana in 1957<sup>1</sup> (which underscored the continuing demise of the Empire upon which Britain had in large measure been founded), and the rise of, and exclusion from (both self- and other-imposed) the emerging European Economic Community (EEC). Such was the impact of these 'landmark events' that by 1964 'Britain's postwar legacy was pretty well exhausted....' and the 'modern era' had begun.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Simon Head 'Britannia's Grab-bag Globalism' *Prospect* (August / September 1996), p.36.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*



This ‘modern era’ presented challenges to the powerful imagery with which much of British identity was associated, but also to the practical context within which Britain as a power could operate. An examination of parliamentary and press debate from the period therefore serves not only to confirm that the aspects identified in Chapter Two were firmly embedded in British national mentality, but also to illuminate the continuing relationship between defence and British identity in the early 1960s.

This chapter focuses on Britain from February 1960 to February 1963 - the years leading up to the beginning of the ‘modern era’ but also, and probably not coincidentally, to Britain’s first attempt to join the EEC. The various responses to this context, be they conscious recognition of the need for change, or stubborn appeals to British history and tradition in support of the maintenance of the status quo, provide enlightening insights into attitudes towards, and perceptions of, British identity at the time.

### **ASPECTS OF BRITISH MENTALITY, FEBRUARY 1960-FEBRUARY 1963**

#### **Greatness**

##### ***The Right to Influence***

In the late 1960s, the belief in British greatness was evident in the presupposition generally manifest in the House of Commons and the Press that the exertion of influence on the world stage was an inherently British right, even trait. Disagreements over defence policy tended to focus on the means through which Britain should exert influence, rather than on the question of whether she ought, in fact, do so. Indeed, in 1962, the relationship between defence and influence was explicitly stated in *The Guardian*, which declared that

‘[o]ne of the fundamental objects of British defence policy is to maintain British influences in the alliances and particularly in Washington.’<sup>3</sup>

### *Nuclear versus Conventional Influence*

The ‘national’ belief in the right to British influence is perhaps best exemplified by the nuclear versus conventional defence debate. At the beginning of 1960, despite the flailing credibility of an independent British nuclear deterrent, the Conservative Government and its supporters still stressed the need to remain players in the nuclear club. For them, an independent deterrent was vital to Britain’s defence, but also essential to retaining Britain’s status and her ability to influence world affairs. For the Opposition and other Government critics, however, an emphasis on a British nuclear deterrent at the expense of conventional forces risked undermining the foundations of British influence, which instead lay in the provision of superior and much-needed conventional forces to the North Atlantic Alliance, and in the ability to preserve peace and stability in the Commonwealth.

### *Nuclear Influence*

The British independent nuclear deterrent, the Conservative Government argued, ensured that Britain’s voice would be listened to and that her influence would be felt, and guaranteed that her concerns would be taken into account by the United States. Nuclear capabilities were presented as militarily significant because they demonstrated an ability to react against all threats and consequently deterred aggression; perhaps more significantly, nuclear capabilities made certain ‘....that the views of this country carry their *proper weight*....’[emphasis added].<sup>4</sup> The prospect of losing Britain’s nuclear voice raised demons of dependency and impotence. Giving up the deterrent, argued the

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<sup>3</sup> Leonard Beaton, ‘Long-term Thoughts on Defence’ *The Guardian* 31 January 1962.

<sup>4</sup> Harold Watkinson, *Hansard House of Commons Debates* 27 February 1961, Vol. 635. 1199.



Conservatives, ‘.... would lose for us our influence in the world and it would place us in dependency on the United States.’<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the British had ‘....to have a deterrent if we are to play a part in the world which our people think we should play.’<sup>6</sup>

The Government recognized that the maintenance of a British deterrent capability entailed certain financial and material burdens, but insisted that such burdens were the necessary ‘subscription’ that had to be paid in order to remain a member of the ‘nuclear club’; a membership that allowed Britain to exert leadership on the world stage. As the Minister of Defence, Harold Watkinson stated in 1962, ‘[i]f the Opposition wish Britain to play her full part...they should not advocate a policy which, if it were ever implemented, would make it impossible for us to give the lead we seek to give.’<sup>7</sup>

The degree of influence that could be derived from Britain’s nuclear deterrent came under increasing scrutiny following the Government’s decision to cancel Britain’s independent nuclear project, ‘Blue Streak’, in 1960. The Government announced that the British deterrent would henceforth be based on the Skybolt nuclear missile, to be purchased from the United States. Critics of the decision accused the Government of dooming Britain to dependence on the United States,<sup>8</sup> arguing that dependence in production and supply was irreconcilable with independence in use.<sup>9</sup> Such dependence would result in Britain’s inability to exert the influence she was entitled to, and was thus, for some, deeply unpalatable. As one critic remarked, ‘.... I cannot conceive that I should wish to live in a world in which we can never assert *our rights* anywhere without first obtaining American support [emphasis added].’<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Neil Marten, Hansard, 5 March 1962, Vol.655. 143.

<sup>6</sup> Sir Arthur Vere Harvey, Hansard, 30 January 1963, Vol. 670. 1065.

<sup>7</sup> Watkinson, Hansard, 6 March 1962, Vol.655. 330.

<sup>8</sup> Woodrow Wyatt, Hansard, 27 April 1960, Vol.622. 292; see also ‘The Missiles, the Money and the Men’ The Daily Express 24 April 1960.

<sup>9</sup> ‘Semi-Independence’ The Sunday Times 16 December 1962.

<sup>10</sup> R.T. Paget, Hansard, 27 April 1960, Vol.622. 249.



This sentiment was attributed to the British population at large, who, it was argued, if made aware of Britain's true 'political subservience' to the United States, would not tolerate the situation 'for one moment.'<sup>11</sup>

The decision to cancel Britain's independent nuclear project was also criticized on the grounds that it was tantamount to relinquishing leadership in technological and military innovation, fields in which Britain had always been at the forefront. Both in the House and the Press, disbelief was expressed that Britain, '....where scientific discovery was cradled....'<sup>12</sup> and which had '....always been among the leaders in every major branch of science and technology....for the first time since the industrial revolution was going to opt out of the race.'<sup>13</sup> Similarly *The Daily Express* in an editorial tellingly entitled 'No Place for Men of Genius' exclaimed :

Either you compete or you become a dependent relative. Either you afford men of faith and of genius and let them get on with the job in hand or you cease to explore and to conquer... Our position in the world depends on leadership... We have never been a second-class nation yet and now is not the time to start.<sup>14</sup>

Pursuit of the independent deterrent was necessary to enable Britain to '.... use the brains, resources and character of the British people in the right way'<sup>15</sup> and ensure that Britain would '....survive and continue, with all its glorious traditions, into...a glorious future....'<sup>16</sup>

### *Conventional Influence*

Critics of the nuclear deterrent (including some of the Government's own back-benchers) also couched their arguments in terms of British influence. To many, the

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<sup>11</sup> Commander Anthony Courtney M.P., 'Letter to the Editor: Defence Issues' Sunday Times 20 January 1963.

<sup>12</sup> E. Shinwell, Hansard, 27 April 1960, Vol.622. 263.

<sup>13</sup> Wyatt, Hansard, 27 April 1960, Vol.622. 288-292. See also 'Cheapening our Defence' The Daily Telegraph 6 August 1962.

<sup>14</sup> 'The Hidden History of it All: No Place for Men of Genius' Daily Express 14 April 1960. See also Aubrey Jones, Hansard, 27 April 1960, Vol.622. 287-288.



nuclear deterrent was being pursued at the expense of Britain's conventional capabilities, and it was through the latter, not the former, that her influence could best be exerted.<sup>17</sup>

Far from enhancing Britain's standing, the nuclear deterrent was in reality only undermining Britain's ability to exert her influence both in NATO and around the world. Government policy, it was feared, would leave the armed forces so reduced in number that '....the Government will find themselves left without enough men to fulfill their commitments and to play their *proper part* in the Western Alliance [emphasis added].'<sup>18</sup>

Michael Howard, for example, wrote in *The Sunday Times* that money spent on Britain's nuclear Polaris fleet could instead be used to '....transform the equipment of the conventional forces on whose efficiency and mobility our capacity to influence events throughout the world really rests.'<sup>19</sup>

Moreover, it appeared that the experience of Suez had undermined the strategic significance of nuclear weapons; possession of the deterrent had not spared Britain from a humiliating withdrawal, nor had it ensured Britain's capacity for independent action in the face of U.S. intervention. Government critics therefore questioned whether British influence in Washington '....whatever it may be, is kept up by this nuclear phantasy...'<sup>20</sup> or whether, in fact, conventional forces were the best means to safeguard British influence. As one Member exclaimed in 1960:

Have we, in fact, increased our prestige, increased our influence, by doing away with conscription, by running down our conventional forces and substituting for them and building up our own nuclear deterrent?...I believe that it is the exact opposite of the truth. I myself believe that our influence in

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<sup>15</sup> Emrys Hughes, *Hansard*, 1 Aug 1961, Vol. 645. 1270.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> George Brown, *Hansard*, 30 January 1963, Vol. 670. 987; Sir Alexander Spearman, *Hansard*, 30 January 1963, Vol. 670. 1006; Gordon Walker, *Hansard*, 31 January 1963, Vol. 670. 1149-1150.

<sup>18</sup> Sir Fitzroy Maclean, *Hansard*, 1 August 1961, Vol. 645. 1254.

<sup>19</sup> Michael Howard, 'Commonsense Defence' *Sunday Times* 27 January 1963; see also 'Galleys or Hoplites' *The Observer* 27 January 1963.

<sup>20</sup> R.H.S. Crossman, *Hansard*, 1 March 1960, Vol. 618. 1065.



the alliance will vary in proportion as we are able to supply to that alliance what the alliance really wants and needs.<sup>21</sup>

The nuclear versus conventional debate also held implications for the geographical exertion of British influence. The Government of the early 1960s recognized that Britain's global presence (albeit declining) gave Britain a unique position to influence affairs well beyond the boundaries of Europe. To maintain her global influence, however, Britain had to be prepared to respond to crises and conflicts in which the use of nuclear weapons would be inapposite. The maintenance of nuclear and conventional forces was therefore argued to be necessary for the sustenance of Britain's position; to '....do otherwise would be merely a kind of "little Englander" defence policy which would spell the end of this country as a nation of significance in the world.'<sup>22</sup>

For critics of Government policy, the pursuit of a nuclear deterrent was distracting Britain from her wider involvement in Commonwealth, and other former colonial, territories, which necessitated conventional capabilities. Britain's global presence meant that she was

....in a position to have more influence than any other in more parts of the world where a limited war is likely to break out. That is something for which we have to prepare more than we are now doing. It is vitally important that we should be able to move our strategic reserve to parts of the world where it can be used effectively....<sup>23</sup>

Britain consequently had to be prepared to preserve peace and stability<sup>24</sup> and be ready to act '....in respect of those incidents where we should be able to make *our proper*

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* See also, 'Letter to the Editor: Defence After Nassau; Influence within an Alliance', The Times 14 January 1963; Sir John Slessor, Marshal of the R.A.F. 'Letter to the Editor: Realities of Interdependence', Sunday Times 13 January 1963; Christopher Hills 'Defence Paradox', The Spectator 27 May 1960; Nigel Birch, Hansard, 29 February 1960, Vol. 618. 924

<sup>22</sup> Watkinson, Hansard, 28 February 1961, Vol. 635. 1508-1509.

<sup>23</sup> Brigadier Sir Ortho Prior-Palmer, Hansard, 29 February 1960, Vol. 618. 936.

<sup>24</sup> Prior-Palmer, Hansard, 29 February 1960, Vol. 618. 938.



*contribution* [emphasis added].<sup>25</sup> Commitments to NATO were insufficient – Britain's role went much further.<sup>26</sup>

### *Inherent Influence*

For some, Britain's world standing and influence were argued to be independent of nuclear weapons; rather they were inherent in her recognized experience, her great history, her '....long knowledge of international affairs....' and in Britain's '.... wisdom, our knowledge of the game....'<sup>27</sup> A similar sentiment was reflected in *The Guardian* in 1961, which commented that British influence depended '....less on the physical possession of British weapons than on the giving of sound advice on policy.'<sup>28</sup> Britain, in other words, had sufficient world standing not to have to worry about '....keeping up with the Nuclear Joneses.'<sup>29</sup>

As one Opposition critic of the nuclear deterrent commented, referring to an article from *The Financial Times*, '....we should leave to General de Gaulle the fatuous search for national prestige through the belated and technically inferior production of weapons that belong in the arsenals of powers richer than ourselves.'<sup>30</sup> Indeed, there was concern that keeping up the deterrent for reasons of prestige would only make Britain appear less confident and undermine her position. As another Opposition critic stated in 1960: 'One's prestige is really in danger when one begins to worry about it, when one says, "I must keep up appearances."'<sup>31</sup> Britain, in other words, should not humiliate herself by scampering after symbols of prestige and influence, for an overt search for the latter would only imply an admission of their loss.

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<sup>25</sup> Austin Albu, *Hansard*, 1 March 1960, Vol.618. 1128-1129.

<sup>26</sup> See for instance, Brigadier Sir John Smyth, *Hansard*, 31 January 1963, Vol.670. 1181.

<sup>27</sup> Donald Wade, *Hansard*, 27 April 1960, Vol.622. 278. See also Spearman, *Hansard*, 30 January 1963, Vol. 670. 1006.

<sup>28</sup> 'Watkinson and his Aircraft' *Guardian* 15 February 1961.

<sup>29</sup> Wade, *Hansard*, 27 April 1960, Vol.622. 278.

<sup>30</sup> George Wigg, *Hansard*, 29 February 1960, Vol.618. 920.

## Mission

In the arguments of disarmament advocates, British influence clearly had the potential for moral ends. The question of moral influence, however, was evident in the arguments of supporters and critics of the British nuclear deterrent alike. British influence, in other words, was not regarded as an end in itself, but rather as a means to exert a moral force for good. Britain's presence and leadership on the world stage were portrayed as beneficial not just to Britain, but to the larger world community, and for this reason, they had to be maintained. Indicative of this perception of morality is that parliamentary and press debates rarely referred to British interests but rather to British 'responsibilities', 'obligations' and 'commitments'. That Britain had a 'duty' to 'play her part' was a theme that resonated across a broad spectrum of opinion in the House of Commons and the Press alike. These responsibilities and duties ranged from specific commitments undertaken to the Alliance and former colonies to a more general obligation to maintain and employ British influence – even in the form of the deterrent – in order that Britain's moral influence might be exerted for the benefit of all.

### *Nuclear Disarmament*

Some Members of the House of Commons, particularly in the Labour Party, believed Britain ought to exert this inherent influence in the direction of nuclear disarmament. Britain, they was argued, should seize the initiative in disarmament that the 'world and history' were searching for<sup>32</sup> and take '....the opportunity ...to stop the spread of nuclear weapons.'<sup>33</sup> If Britain would only give up her deterrent, surely others would be inspired by her example.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Crossman, *Hansard*, 1 March 1960, Vol. 618. 1064.

<sup>32</sup> Harold Wilson, *Hansard*, 6 March 1962, Vol.655. 238.

<sup>33</sup> Wilson, *Hansard*, 6 March 1962, Vol.655. 236. See also 'Blank Cheque for Defence' *The Observer* 24 February 1963; Judith Hart, *Hansard*, 30 January 1963, Vol.670. 1043-1044.

<sup>34</sup> See for instance, George Thomas, *Hansard*, 6 March 1962, Vol. 655. 309.



Yet while many of the calls for an abandonment of the British deterrent were made in the context of the recognition of a decline in British power, appeals for Britain to take the lead in disarmament often referred to this step as a means of increasing British influence, or of halting its decline. The ‘illusion of grandeur,’ it was argued, should be given up, but Britain still had an influential role to play ‘....in civilised ways among the nations with whom we are allies.’<sup>35</sup> The British should exert leadership and influence not through the pursuit of the nuclear deterrent, but by taking their place ‘....at the heads of the nations who stand for civilisation and sanity....’<sup>36</sup> and renouncing the deterrent would secure Britain’s influence, not diminish it. As one M.P. declared,

....our history, and our colonial history in particular, is studded with examples of our having gained influence by surrendering a declining privilege earlier rather than later. I think that this is an exact parallel. I think that this is a case where, without in any way altering the military balance, we could surrender a privilege and increase our influence and our moderating power.<sup>37</sup>

### *The Nuclear Deterrent – A Moral Burden*

The British Government, however, refuted the arguments of critics who perceived possession of the deterrent as immoral. The deterrent was not just a means in itself, an instrument of British influence – it was also the means to a moral end. Britain’s status as a nuclear power had given the British “....great authority and power for good in the world.”<sup>38</sup> It was the possession of the deterrent that enabled Britain to pursue a moral agenda, and the maintenance of a deterrent was a ‘moral responsibility’ that the Government accused the Opposition of seeking to ‘cast off’<sup>39</sup>. Britain, for example, was

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<sup>35</sup> J. Grimond, *Hansard*, 2 Nov 1961, Vol. 648. 375.

<sup>36</sup> K. Zillcaus, *Hansard*, 1 March 1960, Vol.618. 1101

<sup>37</sup> Aubrey Jones, *Hansard*, 5 March 1962, Vol.655. 77

<sup>38</sup> Macmillan quoted in ‘Bipartisan Policy Will Hardly Survive’ *Times* 29 October 1960.

<sup>39</sup> Watkinson, *Hansard*, March 6 1962, Vol.655. 330.



able to contribute to the ongoing disarmament conference in Geneva because it was a nuclear power, and because its scientific experience in the field ensured that

....the counsels of the Government [are] listened to with respect when they are given either in private or in public. If we are to play our part, if we are to try to do what the right hon. gentleman wants us to do, how can we do it with the greatest strength and efficiency if, at the same moment, we announce that we propose to step down from our position as a nuclear Power?<sup>40</sup>

For the Government and its supporters, giving up the deterrent would not promote peace, but would most likely engender war by fostering the perception that Britain would not resist aggression. Unilaterally renouncing the deterrent ‘....would be to encourage potential aggressors...it would not serve the cause of world peace at all.’<sup>41</sup> The Government would consequently

....maintain the deterrent, this position of strength – until we can get disarmament, as we hope – because we sincerely and honestly believe that it is the only way to keep the peace in the world. We have a right to take a pride in that. We have a right to say that it is a moral cause to do this....It is a task for the nation.<sup>42</sup>

The nuclear deterrent was not therefore incompatible with morality; rather it was an essential instrument in that it allowed British influence to be exerted, and contributed to the maintenance of peace. If British influence was accepted as a force for good, and the British nuclear deterrent could secure and enhance this influence, then a British nuclear deterrent could not be immoral. Quite the reverse, it was precisely abandonment of the deterrent that would be immoral, in that it would signify an abrogation of British responsibility to exert its influence for good. As Minister of Defence Harold Watkinson stated, quoting Henry V,

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<sup>40</sup> Watkinson, Hansard, March 6 1962, Vol.655. 329. See also Macmillan, Hansard, 30 January 1963, Vol. 670. .962. See also Watkinson, Hansard, 13 December 1960, Vol. 632. 254; Smyth, Hansard, 1 March 1960, Vol. 618. 1107; Edward Heath, Hansard,. 13 December 1960, Vol. 632. 345. See also J.C. Slessor, ‘Letter to the Editor: The British Deterrent’ Sunday Times 24 April 1960.

<sup>41</sup> Marten, Hansard, 5 March 1962, Vol.655. 143.

<sup>42</sup> Watkinson, Hansard, March 1 1960, Vol.618. 1158. See also Macmillan, Hansard, 30 January 1963, Vo.670. .962; ‘Behind the Missile Smokescreen’ Sunday Times 1 May 1960.



‘There is some soul of goodness in things evil. Would men observedly distil it out.’ My right hon. and hon. Friends and I believe that we can only get peace by holding a continuous responsibility; by not rejecting the nuclear weapon so long as it serves its purpose – as it is certainly doing today – and by firmly going forward with a clear and definite defence policy which plays its maximum part in keeping the peace and in our alliances....<sup>43</sup>

Similarly, Captain John Litchfield M.P. declared in 1960,

I want to quote something recently said in another place, which I think, should be borne in mind when we debate foreign affairs or defence policy: ‘....one cannot have a foreign policy at all unless it has the backing of....force. We should only reduce ourselves immediately to the status of a second-class nation, with no power for good or ill’ – [OFFICIAL REPORT, House of Lords, 10<sup>th</sup> February, 1960; Vol. 220, c.1154.] I emphasise those last words, ‘No Power for good or ill’.<sup>44</sup>

As *The Sunday Times* asserted in 1960, while nuclear war itself might be ‘sinful’, it was ‘....morally better to have the means of deterring it, or committing it, than to be clients of others who might by their policies involve us in it.’<sup>45</sup> Equally, there was no ‘morality’ in ‘sheltering’ behind a deterrent provided for, and controlled by, the United States.<sup>46</sup>

### *Conventional Morality*

Britain, however, had conventional, as well as nuclear, moral obligations. These conventional obligations were to both Britain’s NATO allies and her former colonies.

To many of the Government’s critics, the nuclear deterrent was being pursued at the expense of Britain’s conventional capabilities, preventing Britain from honouring her obligations to the North Atlantic Alliance. For some, Britain was palpably failing in her ‘....solemnly pledged commitments....’<sup>47</sup> to NATO; the British were not ‘fulfilling our obligations under the Treaty’<sup>48</sup>, which honour demanded be met:

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<sup>43</sup> Watkinson, *Hansard*, 27 February 1961, Vol.635. 1216.

<sup>44</sup> Captain John Litchfield, *Hansard*, 29 February 1960, Vol.618. 890-891

<sup>45</sup> ‘Behind the Missile Smokescreen’ *Sunday Times* 1 May 1960.

<sup>46</sup> Amery, *Hansard*, 28 February 1961, Vol. 635. 1421.

<sup>47</sup> ‘Britain’s Defence Policy: Argument Growing into a Feud’ *Times* 8 February 1962.

<sup>48</sup> Maclean, *Hansard*, 1 August 1961, Vol. 645. 1252; ‘The Nation’s Effort’ *Times* 5 March 1962.



If Sir Anthony Eden or anybody else pledged the word of the country that we shall maintain four divisions with treaty territories, then we ought to honour that commitment to the best of our ability unless we get agreement from the other signatories of the treaty providing that we need not do quite so much. It would be quite wrong to do so without permission.<sup>49</sup>

This notion of honouring commitments and duties was deemed to be held not just by the House, but also by the nation; it was a British trait:

If ... [the Minister of Defence] thinks we are a pusillanimous and ignorant lot, he should remember one very simple thing, namely, that when the British people have been told the truth they have never run away from their obligations, nor from their duty.<sup>50</sup>

While the Government declared its intention to meet its conventional force commitments to NATO, pressure on resources raised the question of meeting British commitments and responsibilities beyond Europe. Withdrawal from global status was deemed unacceptable not just because it would result in diminished influence for Britain, but because Britain held responsibilities that extended beyond Europe.<sup>51</sup> The Government itself was quite adamant that these responsibilities existed. As the Minister of Defence declared in 1961: 'Implying a major withdrawal from the rest of the world for the sake of Europe certainly seems to me to imply that our responsibilities begin and end there. They do not.'<sup>52</sup> These were world-wide commitments that Britain was honour-bound to keep<sup>53</sup>, regardless of increasing commitments to NATO. As the Minister of Defence stated;

We do not propose to leave the Arabian peninsula and our treaty obligations there. We do not intend to leave places such as Hong Kong defenceless or to abandon those members of the Commonwealth in whose defence we have agreed to share.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Sir H Legge-Bourke, Hansard, 5 March 1962, Vol.655. 112. See also Wigg, Hansard, 28 February 1961, col.1461; Wigg Hansard, 5 March 1962, Vol.655. 97.

<sup>50</sup> Wigg, Hansard, 29 February 1960, Vol.618. 921. See also Wigg, Hansard, 31 January 1963, Vol. 670. 1196.

<sup>51</sup> Watkinson, Hansard, 29 February 1960, Vol. 618. 847.

<sup>52</sup> Watkinson, Hansard, 1 November 1961, Vol.648. 194. See also Watkinson, Hansard, 28 February 1961, Vol. 618. 1508-1509

<sup>53</sup> See for instance Marten, Hansard, 5 March 1962, Vol.655. 140.

<sup>54</sup> Watkinson, Hansard, 28 February 1961, Vol. 635.1508.



Conventional forces were therefore perceived as necessary to ensuring that Britain retained the capacity to act not just in defence of her ‘interests’, but in relation to the worldwide responsibilities to ‘friends and allies’ that Britain alone was in a position to meet.<sup>55</sup> As the Minister of Defence was quoted as saying in *The Times* in 1962, over 40 territories and 32 million people looked to Britain ‘....alone for their protection’, a responsibility that required flexibility and mobility in Britain’s conventional armed forces.<sup>56</sup> Similarly, *The New Statesman* described Britain’s armed forces as

....the slender safeguards of stability and peace. If we withdraw them, other great powers by one means or another will take their place – with the possibility of conflict and the certainty of a reduction in British ability to influence events in parts of the world where our influence can still be potent and influential.<sup>57</sup>

Pressure on resources nonetheless meant that a reduction in overseas commitments was increasingly a matter for consideration. However, sensitivity to the notion of honouring obligations remained apparent even when such reductions were being advocated. For instance, it was argued that scaling down manpower and overseas bases should not be regarded by Britain

....with its great traditions...as a policy of scuttle, because that is not what it is. What it means is that we can afford to reshuffle the pack and to have fewer people at a certain place: but that does not mean that we are any the less effective there.<sup>58</sup>

### *Exemplary Moral Influence*

For a smaller minority in the House, Britain’s moral responsibility had to be excised through different means entirely. Nuclear weapons, it was argued, were preventing Britain from contributing to the benefit of mankind as she should; ‘....because

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<sup>55</sup> Prior-Palmer, *Hansard*, 29 February 1960, Vol.618. 936.

<sup>56</sup> Watkinson, ‘Britain’s Role in Defence of Europe: Commitment Will Be Met’ *Times* 8 June 1962.

<sup>57</sup> *The New Statesman* 3 November 1961.

<sup>58</sup> Marten, *Hansard*, 5 March 1962, Vol.655. 136-137. See also Paget, *Hansard*, 5 March 1962, Vol.655. 150. See also Mayhew, *Hansard*, 28 February 1961, Vol.635. 1413.



we are mesmerised by our nuclear weapons, we are not able to play the part we ought to play in bringing fullness of life to people who are hungry and needy.’<sup>59</sup> For this section of opinion the only goal in keeping with Britain’s historical traditions of moral leadership was that of nuclear disarmament, even if this had to be unilateral. Britain’s representatives at the disarmament conferences in Geneva, for instance, had to ensure that negotiations would

....be worthy of Britain’s past and will carry on in a way which is in harmony with Britain’s history and with man’s progress. In that way we may save our country and make our contribution towards assisting mankind to save itself.<sup>60</sup>

The Government consequently had grave responsibilities that they could not shirk, or else they would be doing

....a great injustice not only to our people but to the people of all the world. Great Britain could be a great wee Power. We should take no part in these great weapons of destruction.... Let Britain lead the world in the ways of peace and not in the ways of war....let us direct our attention towards matters of peace and goodwill in which the greatness of this small nation of Great Britain can play a noble and wonderful part in the future. The Government have... an opportunity to lead mankind not to the grave but to the higher pinnacle of civilisation.<sup>61</sup>

In 1962, the movement for Moral Re-Armament incorporated the theme of nuclear disarmament into its appeal for a morally re-armed nation – Britain – to lead the world to peace through example:

One nation, morally re-armed, would teach all nations how to live. One government, morally re-armed, would lead the world instantly into the paths of peace....Britain, morally re-armed, could be that nation. It will be Britain’s hour of true greatness as her leaders and her led begin to play their part in the greatest revolution of all time whereby the Cross of Christ transforms the world....<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Thomas, Hansard, 6 March 1962, Vol.655. 309.

<sup>60</sup> Ellis Smith, Hansard, 2 November 1961, Vol.648. 458.

<sup>61</sup> William Baxter, Hansard, 5 March 1962, Vol.655. 122.

<sup>62</sup> ‘One Enemy, One Answer for the World’ Promotional material, Times 9 February 1962.



## Military Virtue

It is intriguing that even a movement calling for British moral influence in nuclear disarmament should have chosen to incorporate the term ‘re-armament’ in its title. Indeed, a certain relationship between military capabilities (albeit in this instance analogously), influence and morality was evident in most parliamentary and press debate on defence in the period surveyed. The majority of the House equated military forces with Britain’s ability to exert her influence, maintain the peace, and ultimately ensure her own survival. Yet an emphasis on morality curtailed any purely militaristic conceptualization of the British nation; Britain was not a warrior nation in the sense that she sought out war; rather her historically proven determination to defend herself, her values and her allies, encouraged a close association between the British military (and military virtues) and British national identity.

### *The Armed Forces in British Mentality*

This association was clearly manifested in the special regard with which Members on both side of the House were careful to refer to the Armed Forces, most evidently in the form of address ‘hon. and gallant’ bestowed upon Members of Parliament who had formerly served in the Armed Forces. It was more explicitly expressed in the almost nostalgic recollections of the contribution of the Forces in days gone by, and in praise of the contemporary Services. The Minister of Defence, for instance, recalled ‘... the long convoy battles in which the Navy, the Army and the Royal Air Force all played such a gallant part’<sup>63</sup> and praised the ‘steadiness and efficiency’ and ‘first-class job that’ that British Servicemen were doing ‘for their country.’<sup>64</sup> The men of Bomber Command were similarly described as

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<sup>63</sup> Watkinson, *Hansard*, 29 February 1960, Vol.618. 845.

<sup>64</sup> Watkinson, *Hansard*, 5 March 1962, Vol.655. 46.



....doing a magnificent job, at times at great risk to themselves. If one sees them at work one realises that we have something there which is helping Britain in world affairs today, *something which will ensure we have our say* [emphasis added].<sup>65</sup>

A general awareness evidently existed that criticism of the Armed Forces was improper, or would at least be considered such by the population at large. This sensitivity was reflected in Government attempts to equate Opposition criticisms of its policy with criticism of the Armed Forces, and in the Opposition's rebuttal of such attempts. In 1963, for instance, Emrys Hughes, M.P. for South Ayrshire, criticized an Opposition Member for 'denigrating' British troops overseas, a remark he termed characteristic of a 'totally irresponsible Opposition.'<sup>66</sup> His accusation was met by a defensive rebuttal;

It is not fair to ascribe those sentiments to my hon. Friend...He was talking not about the quality of the troops – he is the last man to denigrate the British troops as such – but was addressing his remarks to the Government Front Bench....<sup>67</sup>

Another Member of the Opposition responded to accusations of enmity against the Armed Forces by referring to

....the Minister's rather silly remark that because we have no confidence in his policy we have no confidence in the Regular forces....we have great regard for the men themselves....But that does not mean that we regard the policy which those men are being used to implement as right.<sup>68</sup>

### ***The Munich Complex and the Evils of Pacifism***

The importance and contribution of the Armed Forces to Britain was further reinforced by the perceived consequences of being militarily unprepared, or of giving an enemy cause to question Britain's preparation and resolve for military action in defence of the nation, its interests and values. These consequences could range from a loss of influence to the outbreak of war, with the ultimate threat of invasion. Lack of

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<sup>65</sup> Harvey, Hansard, 13 December 1960, Vol.632. 325.

<sup>66</sup> Hughes, Hansard, 30 January 1963, Vol.670. 1030. For similar accusations see Smyth, Hansard, 31 January 1963, Vol.670. 1174-1176; Watkinson, Hansard, 30 January 1963, Vol.670. 983;

<sup>67</sup> Wigg, Hansard, 30 January 1963, Vol.670.1030. See also See Gordon Walker, Hansard, 5 March 1962, Vol.655. 64.



preparation, for example, was partly blamed for failure at Suez, while the outbreak of war in 1914 and 1939 was interpreted as the result of an aggressor's misperception of British military weakness and lack of resolve.<sup>69</sup>

The integral role of successful defence of Britain, its interest and values, in British mentality was perhaps hinted at in the description of Suez as not just a defeat, but '....a *humiliating disaster*....'<sup>70</sup>, and the '....*biggest humiliation and national defeat* since the Dutch sailed up the Medway three hundred years ago....[emphasis added]'.<sup>71</sup>

This sentiment goes some way to explaining the negative connotations associated with 'pacifism' across a wide spectrum of opinion in the House of Commons. With few exceptions, pacifism was portrayed as a policy which, rather than preventing war, at worst encouraged it, and at best left one unprepared to fight it. Britain's will and capacity to fight had to be made clear to potential aggressors – when these were not made explicit, the consequences were likely to result in war. The 'Munich' complex pervaded defence debates and commentary:

The speech of the hon. Member for Rossendale reminded me of the sort of woolly nonsense talked after the First World War, the sort of thing which led to the Peace Ballot and to Ribbentrop writing to Hitler saying that this country would not fight.<sup>72</sup>

Likewise:

Continental politicians are perfectly justified in considering that this country may well have been directly or indirectly largely responsible for the outbreak of two world wars. They can argue that if Hitler or the Kaiser had known that we really intended to fight and if they had really understood our great war potential, humanity might have been spared considerable suffering.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Brown, *Hansard*, 6 March 1962, Vol.655. 316.

<sup>69</sup> See for instance, Smyth, *Hansard*, 1 March 1960, Vol.618. 1103; Watkinson, *Hansard*, 1 November 1961, Vol. 648. 193; Crossman, *Hansard*, 30 January 1963, Vol. 670. 1010.

<sup>70</sup> Wigg, *Hansard*, 27 February 1961, Vol. 635. 1286.

<sup>71</sup> Wigg, *Hansard*, 27 February, Vol.635. 1275. The word 'humiliation' was often applied to Suez; see, for instance, 'This Ends Our Big Rocket Business' *Express* 18 April 1960.

<sup>72</sup> Prior-Palmer, *Hansard*, 13 December 1960, Vol.632. .303.

<sup>73</sup> Commander J.W. Maitland, *Hansard*, 1 March 1960, Vol.618. 1082-1083.



The sensitivity to pacifist connotations was not confined to party membership, underlying that the ‘special relationship’ between Britain and her military capabilities was not the exclusive domain of a political faction. This is apparent in that references to pacifism addressed to Members of the Opposition frequently carried accusatory overtones, while criticisms of the Government’s defence policy were often prefaced with defensive negations of pacifist sentiment. Britain’s determination in defence had been essential to the survival of Britain in the past, and hence policies or statements that appeared to be in conflict with this spirit were subject to reproach.

Pacifist sentiments, for instance, were attributed to the Labour Party in the context of its calls for disarmament, which were on one occasion described by a Government member as ‘....pacifist nonsense...the sort of nonsense which resulted in the death of many very gallant men.’<sup>74</sup> This perspective is echoed in the following declaration:

I understand and respect, as I think we all do, the strictly pacifist view that all use of force is wrong but there is a rather more ignoble variant of it abroad at present. It is that, since nuclear weapons are so devastating, it is better to accept slavery than death....That is not the spirit in which we faced our destiny at Dunkirk.<sup>75</sup>

Criticisms of Government policy were therefore carefully phrased to distance Members from pacifist connotations. In 1960, for example, R.H.S. Crossman, M.P. stated: ‘I criticise our nuclear strategy while making it quite clear that I am not a pacifist....’<sup>76</sup> In the same year, George Wigg M.P., referring to an article in which he had criticised the Government’s defence policy, was careful to disassociate himself from pacifist sentiment, particularly given the title of the journal in which it had been published:

Before the Defence White Paper of 1957 was issued I wrote an article. No one would publish it. I do not blame anyone for that. I was asked if I would

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<sup>74</sup> Prior-Palmer, Hansard, 29 February 1960, Vol.618. 933.

<sup>75</sup> Amery, Hansard, 28 February 1961, Vol.635. 1421.

<sup>76</sup> Crossman, Hansard, 1 March 1960, Vol.618. 1059.



allow it to be published in Peace News. I did not take any money for it. I am not a Pacifist.<sup>77</sup>

Accusations of pacifism were thus often met with heated denials. One such accusation suggesting that the Labour Party had advocated disarmament before the Second World War was referred to as ‘....a serious allegation against a whole party in an historical context of the greatest importance.’<sup>78</sup> In response to the same accusation, Geoffrey de Freitas, M.P. declared: ‘Never in the history of this party has it had a pacifist policy. We have always had in our ranks pacifists whose view we respect and whom we like very much, even those of us who are non-pacifists; but we have never been a pacifist party.’<sup>79</sup>

The limited appeal of pacifism to the majority of Members, or more significantly, of the limited appeal Members considered pacifism had to the British nation, should thus be in little doubt. This was stated more explicitly in the House in 1962:

I know that there are people, and I respect their sincerity, who are pacifists and who will have none of this. I think that they are perfectly sincere and dedicated people, but I repeat that I do not think that they represent the view of the ordinary men and women of this country....<sup>80</sup>

### ***Ordinary People and the Resilient Fighting Spirit***

These ordinary men and women had proven their resolve to defend their country and resist aggression in the past and it was unthinkable that they should not do so again. Not only would the British soldier ‘....always fight’ when it came to anything ‘worthwhile’<sup>81</sup>, but the armed forces themselves had traditionally been, and would continue to be, constituted from ‘ordinary people’, from ‘....volunteers who were willing

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<sup>77</sup> Wigg, *Hansard*, 29 February 1960, Vol. 618. 910.

<sup>78</sup> S. Silverman, *Hansard*, 29 February 1960, Vol.618. 932.

<sup>79</sup> Geoffrey de Freitas, *Hansard*, 29 February 1960, Vol.618. 948-949.

<sup>80</sup> Dr. Alan Thompson, *Hansard*, 6 March 1962, Vol.655. 294.

<sup>81</sup> Smyth, *Hansard*, 1 November 1961, Vol.648. 250.

and proud to serve their country....’<sup>82</sup> Interestingly, in 1961 a letter to *The Observer* suggested that young British men interested in ‘real soldiering’ were actually being put off joining the Army because of an over-emphasis in recruiting on Army life being ‘fun and games.’<sup>83</sup>

The British people, then, would not be cowed in the face of aggression. For example, it was alleged that the Soviets, in conducting nuclear tests, had been seeking to ‘....destroy morale and cause dismay....’and that ‘....to some degree they have succeeded, *though not in this country* [emphasis added].’<sup>84</sup> The Soviets might be hoping to induce fear among the British population, but ‘....of course, that would fail.’<sup>85</sup>

Similarly, whatever disagreeable steps might be necessary in the pursuit of defence, the nation would be able to accept them, even if, like Conscription, they were traditionally unwelcome. It was understood that ‘[i]f the nation is faced with a crisis the nation will respond.’<sup>86</sup> As Captain John Litchfield M.P. commented in 1961:

There were times when my right. Hon Friend the Member for Woodford (Sir W. Churchill) spoke frankly to the nation about the perils which confronted us, not only during the war years but before. The response, at any rate during the war years, was certainly not lacking.<sup>87</sup>

On occasion, the Government was criticized for not having sufficient faith in the British people and in their ability to sustain great efforts in defence of the country. Recalling the words of Winston Churchill on the resilience of the British people, *The Times* chastised the Government for seeing ‘....their people in a less heroic light. The national effort can be increased....A Britain true to herself needs to be both economically

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<sup>82</sup> Watkinson, *Hansard*, 5 March 1962, Vol.655. 41.

<sup>83</sup> Anthony Verrier, ‘Letter to the Editor: Arms and Men’ *The Observer* 5 February 1961.

<sup>84</sup> Grimond, *Hansard*, 2 November 1961, Vol. 648. 369.

<sup>85</sup> F. Blackburn, *Hansard*, 1 Nov 1961, Vol.648. 225.

<sup>86</sup> F.J. Bellenger, *Hansard*, 1 November 1961, Vol. 648. 242.

<sup>87</sup> Captain John Litchfield, *Hansard*, 1 November 1961, Vol.648. 280.



*and defensively strong* [emphasis added].’<sup>88</sup> The population, military and civilian alike, hence remained, ‘.... apart from a comparatively few Communist sympathisers and Communist dupes, ... *united in its determination to defend itself*’<sup>89</sup> and the British had ‘....never been more determined than they are today that they *will not be dominated by any foreign dictator* [emphasis added].’<sup>90</sup> Similarly, in a speech in Washington in 1961, reported in *the Daily Telegraph*, Prime Minister Macmillan declared:

‘There have been times when the world has not regretted our courage, even if it has been judged desperate. Sometimes people doubted our determination. It was so in 1913 and again in 1939. Even to-day some people talk about ‘creeping neutralism’ in Britain. Yet do not misunderstand our national character. Look at the record and draw the moral.’<sup>91</sup>

Military capability and willingness to defend the nation were thus perceived among the majority of the House as positive national attributes, and those who criticized defence policy left themselves open to accusations of disloyalty and cowardice. Even when questions were raised about the willingness of the British public to sustain the defence burden, it was made clear that ‘....national defence...influence[d] Britain’s role and authority in the world.’<sup>92</sup> The Armed Forces ensured British influence, the maintenance of peace, and the preservation of Britain. These were all ‘just causes’, and while Britain did not like war, she was morally courageous enough not to shy away from it.

## Freedom

In the context of the Cold War, the defence of freedom was generally considered such a ‘just cause’. Indeed, an emphasis on Britain as a free nation was prevalent in

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<sup>88</sup> ‘The Nation’s Effort’ *Times* 5 March, 1962.

<sup>89</sup> Spearman, *Hansard*, 6 March 1962, Vol.655. 290.

<sup>90</sup> Smyth, *Hansard*, 1 Nov 1961, Vol.648. 246.

<sup>91</sup> Harold Macmillan quoted in ‘Premier Wants NATO ATOM Pact’ *Telegraph* 8 April 1961.

<sup>92</sup> ‘Defence by Cowardice’ *The New Statesman* 3 November 1961.

defence debates in the early 1960s. Freedom was a trait that differentiated Britain from Communist states and was perceived to be most threatened by them.

### *Britain as Defender of Freedom*

That Britain associated herself with freedom is evident in references to Britain as the defender of freedom, both in a historical and contemporary context. In seeking to rally support in the House for the Government's defence policy, the Minister of Defence emphasized the need to support the Armed Forces, urging that failure to pursue a strong defence '....would be to betray our trust to them and to those who died for peace and freedom in two world wars.'<sup>93</sup> In the present, Britain was argued to be making an ongoing contribution to the '....nuclear deterrent of the free world as a whole....'<sup>94</sup>, a factor '....so important to the survival of freedom and civilisation that any contribution we can make will be well worth the effort.'<sup>95</sup> Likewise, it was emphasized that Britain should have the courage to undertake nuclear tests, because failure to do so would be tantamount to '....handing ourselves and *the whole free world which we must defend* to be trampled on by the Russians [emphasis added].'<sup>96</sup>

This emphasis on the 'world' as opposed to just the West was explicit. In 1960, for example, the Prime Minister stated that while Britain was making a loyal contribution to NATO, her efforts in more 'distant areas' were assisting '....the defence of the free world, and, indeed, the survival of the free world....'<sup>97</sup> Furthermore, Britain's global presence was also associated with freedom in the Commonwealth where, it was argued, she had granted freedom to millions, and would be continuing to do so in the future.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Watkinson, *Hansard*, 29 February 1960, Vol.618. 864.

<sup>94</sup> Smyth, *Hansard*, 1 March 1960, Vol.618. 1107.

<sup>95</sup> 'Defence & Disarmament: Can Britain Do a Better Job?' *Crossbow* (January 1961).

<sup>96</sup> Macmillan, *Hansard*, 31 October 1961, Vol.648. 37.

<sup>97</sup> Macmillan, *Hansard*, 30 January 1963, Vol. 670. 960.

<sup>98</sup> Blackburn, *Hansard*, 1 November 1961, Vol.648. 226.



*Freedom and the Volunteer Tradition*

The Government's critics, however, perceived the steps taken in the name of the defence of Britain as threatening the very freedom that Britain claimed to be defending. This perception was apparent in the discussions in the House on conscripted versus all-volunteer forces for Britain. Faced with increasing commitments and fewer resources, the Government in the early 1960's was torn between the desire to end conscription and the need to meet manpower requirements to fulfill both overseas and NATO obligations. Conscription might contribute to the defence of Britain by resolving the problem of shortages in the Armed Forces, yet in compelling men to serve against their will, it also appeared to endanger a quintessentially British notion – that of freedom. Conscription, it was argued, '....has always been hateful in the eyes of our people....'<sup>99</sup> It was argued that in a country like Britain, '....where we enjoy independence and free ideas, it is better to have Regular Services without all the stigma of a forced call-up.'<sup>100</sup>

Even the advocates of Conscription appeared to acknowledge that it was a necessary evil rather than an essentially acceptable solution.<sup>101</sup> The Minister of Defence, for example, when espousing the possibility of selective National Service, or the extension of service for some National Servicemen, expressed his 'regret'<sup>102</sup> hoping that his policies would be accepted by the House '....as a sensible and practical way of trying to meet this need in a free country which is determined to try to have a volunteer Army, Navy and Air Force.'<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Bellenger, *Hansard*, 1 November 1961, Vol.648. 243.

<sup>100</sup> Sir John Maitland, *Hansard*, 27 February, Vol.635. 1272. See also Watkinson, *Hansard*, 5 March 1962, Vol.655. 41.

<sup>101</sup> See for instance Spearman, *Hansard*, 5 March 1962, Vol.655. 293.

<sup>102</sup> Watkinson, *Hansard*, 1 November 1961, Vol.648. 202.

<sup>103</sup> Watkinson, *Hansard*, 1 November 1961, Vol.648. 203.

## Democracy

Closely linked to the notion of freedom, and of similar prominence in the debates, was the notion of Britain's democratic traditions. That Members on all sides recognized a close affinity between Britain and democracy is evident in the three main arguments that appealed to the concept of democracy in the debates.

### *Britain as Democratic Tradition*

The first of these arguments reflected an image of Britain as the originator and exporter of democracy – a model to be looked up to and adopted. The moral superiority of democracy was beyond question, especially when contrasted with Communism, and Britain was clearly a member of this morally superior club.<sup>104</sup> One of Britain's tasks should therefore be '....to prove to the world that our system of government and our way of life are to be admired and copied and are superior to those of the Communists.'<sup>105</sup> In this, Britain could lead by example, spearheading an alternative defence against the Russians by promoting '....our own political reforms and improve[ing] our own political institutions. The answer of this country should be to concentrate on building up our economy and political strength and making our influence felt in that direction among our allies.'<sup>106</sup> As the Prime Minister was quoted as saying in 1960:

'For our part, we have nothing to fear from an open confrontation of opposed ideas. For we believe that our way of life is better materially, morally and spiritually; and that, placed on trial before an impartial and unfettered jury, the truth that we hold must triumph.'<sup>107</sup>

Similarly, *The Daily Mail* commented in 1961 that in Britain there existed '....more open criticisms and debate of "official" policies than in any other capital.'

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<sup>104</sup> Brown, *Hansard*, 1 November 1961, Vol.648. 173 –174.

<sup>105</sup> R. Gresham Cooke, *Hansard*, 2 November 1961, Vol.648. 416.

<sup>106</sup> Grimond, *Hansard*, 2 November 1961, Vol.648. 371.

<sup>107</sup> Macmillan, 'Bipartisan Policy Will Hardly Survive' *Times* 29 October 1960. See also Bruce Rothwell, 'Dear Mr. Whitney' *The Daily Mail* 13 January 1961.



Secondly, Britain was argued to have a part to play in the establishment and preservation of democracy in those areas where she held special responsibilities. There were concerns regarding how Britain could continue to exert her democratic influence overseas in the wake of excessive reductions in her Armed Forces. The question was raised, for instance, of how Britain would ‘impose’ a new constitution in Rhodesia and ‘administer law and order there’ if her colonial commitments were abrogated.<sup>108</sup>

Thirdly, Britain’s tradition of democracy was appealed to in the context of the contemporary powers and performance of Parliament. One Member, for example, commented that Britain, who had exported democracy to Germany in the wake of the Second World War, was now failing to live up to her own democratic traditions:

Germany’s Parliamentary or democratic constitution was partly forced on her by the British, as well as certain other nations. It is ironical to think that we, the British, who had helped to defeat them and then imposed a constitution on them, should have given them something which we have not here – and we call ourselves the Mother of Parliaments.<sup>109</sup>

Britain’s nuclear deterrent accentuated concerns of whether Britain was living up to her particular democratic heritage. Advocates of the nuclear deterrent believed that it could contribute to the protection of Britain and the values – like freedom and democracy – that it represented. For critics, the demands of command, control and security that the deterrent exerted were the antithesis of the democracy that Britain stood for.<sup>110</sup>

The Government were therefore accused of putting the maintenance of the credibility of the nuclear deterrent ahead of ‘....all other claims, even the claim of this country to be a democracy or even the claim that we should govern ourselves through Parliament.’<sup>111</sup> Regardless of practical difficulties, Parliament had historically been

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<sup>108</sup> Viscount Lambton, Hansard, 28 February 1961, Vol.635. 1491

<sup>109</sup> Bellenger, Hansard, 27 February 1961, Vol.635. 1263 –1264. See also Bellenger, ‘Letter to the Editor: M.P.s Kept in the Dark: Voting Without Facts’ Telegraph 15 February 1961.

<sup>110</sup> See, for instance, Michael Foot, Hansard, 13 December 1960, Vol.632. 255.

<sup>111</sup> M. Foot, Hansard, 13 December 1960, Vol.632. 256.



regarded as ‘.... sovereign and absolute, the “grand inquest” of the nation....’<sup>112</sup>, a duty that critics of the Government believed they were no longer in a position to adequately discharge.

## **Independence**

Defence debates from the period illustrate that a consciousness of ‘island status’ endowed Britain with both a physical and metaphorical independence from the European Continent in British mentality. Physically, the notion of being an island was entwined with the idea of successful defence and preservation of the country; metaphorically, the successful defence of Britain, particularly when much of Europe had fallen, had reinforced a sense of distinctiveness and separation from the Continent. In the ‘modern era’, however, the changing strategic context was forcing some to re-evaluate the defensive advantages of island status, and in turn question the extent to which Britain could continue to ‘stand alone.’

### ***Separateness, Independence and Security: The Physical Dimension***

The most subtle, and perhaps most subconscious indication of the influence of island status on British mentality lies in the number of references scattered throughout defence debates to ‘these islands’, or ‘this island’ in lieu of ‘Britain’.<sup>113</sup> This sense of separateness from the Continent was also highlighted by the differentiation between ‘here’ and ‘there’ in references to Britain and Europe. One Member of the House, for instance, referred to the United States’ ‘....solemn undertakings to come to the aid of Europe if there is aggression *there* [emphasis added].’<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Cooke, Hansard, 2 November 1961, Vol.648. 417.

<sup>113</sup> See, for instance, Antony Head, Hansard, 27 April 1960, Vol.622. 258; Watkinson, Hansard, 13 December 1960, Vol.632. 250; Page, Hansard, 27 April 1960, Vol.622. 252.

<sup>114</sup> Spearman, Hansard, 6 March 1962, Vol.655. 290.



More explicitly, the consciousness of island status was reflected in the policy of the Government and its critics alike. In 1963, for example, the Minister of Defence declared that '[a]s an island, we need some independence in our own defence....As an island, we require some independence of ability to defend ourselves.'<sup>115</sup> The Government argued that the nuclear deterrent would allow Britain to remain detached and separate from the Continent in case of Soviet attack, '....re-creat[ing] the Channel as a strategic barrier.'<sup>116</sup>

Britain's status as a separate territorial entity was also prominent in the mentality of some of the Government's critics. Britain was perceived as physically and historically distinct from the Continent, and tradition dictated that Britain not become over-committed in Europe:

We are an island people. We have an island economy, and our life is largely dependent on seaborne communications. If we cannot protect these lifelines, we have had it....The Continental strategy is quite foreign to our historic military tradition. It is not usual for us to maintain a very large proportion of our Army as a standing army on the Continent of Europe in peacetime....It is quite foreign to all our history and, I believe, to our true military interests.<sup>117</sup>

### *Isolation, Independence and Security: The Metaphorical Dimension*

Island status, however, was a figurative as well as literal concept. Britain's history of being left to 'stand alone' in defence while the rest of Europe faltered was profoundly influential in shaping a sense of isolation from Europe in British mentality and in the resulting emphasis on the need for independence.

For the Government and some of its supporters, this historical experience provided an imperative to seek continued independence in the sphere of defence. Indeed, in some respects, the pursuit of an independent deterrent was portrayed as a natural

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<sup>115</sup> Peter Thorneycroft, *Hansard*, 31 January 1963, Vol.670. 1155.

<sup>116</sup> Paget, *Hansard*, 27 April 1960, Vol. 622. 249.

<sup>117</sup> Litchfield, *Hansard*, 1 November 1961 Vol.648. 276-277.



outgrowth of Britain's experiences of defence in the past. As Prime Minister Macmillan was reported as saying in 1961:

‘ Although we in Britain have been accustomed for centuries to fighting our battles as part of an alliance, *we have always been ready in the last resort to fight alone....So our determination to make our own nuclear contribution was in a sense instinctive* [emphasis added].’<sup>118</sup>

The following year, *The Daily Telegraph* outlined a similar argument:

....for a British Government to devolve on others wholly a major section of its primary responsibility for our defence would be to give immense hostages to fortune....*if history repeats itself, there are situations in which Britain should have its destiny in its own hands* [emphasis added].<sup>119</sup>

In 1963, the argument was again raised in the House:

In 1914, fighting during the retreat from Mons, I should not have believed that, within a quarter of a century, we should be fighting almost alone over the same ground in much the same sort of conditions. One would have said that this cannot happen again. But these things do happen, and *I think that a nation which has experienced a Dunkirk could never again agree to rely entirely upon another nation for its defence*. I do not think that the people of this country would support a party with a policy of that kind [emphasis added].<sup>120</sup>

These sentiments were reflected in arguments supporting a British nuclear deterrent. In 1962, for instance, *The Sunday Times* carried an article by Alan Clark in which he stated that

....in forsaking our deterrent power we should be finally resigning not simply Great Power status; we should be giving up finally, and without hope of redemption, the ability to decide our own destiny. We should be committing our fate – phrase it as we might in treaties of alliance and “interdependence” – to whatsoever our enemies might consider merciful or our friends expedient.<sup>121</sup>

Arguments against British ‘dependency’ in defence were forcefully revisited in 1963, after an American decision to abandon development of the Skybolt project led to a British agreement to purchase another nuclear deterrent system from United States; the

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<sup>118</sup> Macmillan quoted in ‘Premier Wants NATO ATOM Pact’ *Telegraph* 8 April 1961.

<sup>119</sup> ‘Cheapening our Defence’ *Telegraph* 6 August 1962.

<sup>120</sup> Smyth, *Hansard*, 31 January 1963, Vol.670. 1178.



submarine-based Polaris.<sup>122</sup> In the wake of both the Skybolt and Polaris decisions, Government sensitivity to the significance of ‘independence’ to the British psyche was reflected in its emphasis on Britain’s ‘independent’ control of its deterrent and on Britain’s ‘independent’ contribution to the nuclear defence of the West.<sup>123</sup>

Interestingly, however, even Members who were skeptical about the need for an independent British deterrent recognized that ‘....there might come a time in the future when we are left alone....’,<sup>124</sup>

### *The Beginnings of a Shift in Emphasis – Vulnerability and Interdependence*

Despite the significance that still clearly attached to being an island, there were signs in the early 1960s that the changing strategic landscape was beginning to influence members of Government and Opposition alike. The Government, for example, recognized that Britain’s position required ‘interdependence’ as well as ‘independence’<sup>125</sup> while critics of the emphasis on the deterrent argued that nuclear capabilities could never restore the protective function of the Channel; the range of nuclear weapons meant that Britain would, from now on, always be vulnerable. Therefore, while Britons had almost always ‘....been protected by the sea, by our Navy and have had no fear of invasion....Geography no longer protects us....’<sup>126</sup> Similarly, one critic declared in 1963; ‘....In the past, of course, a small island could stand alone because of its qualities of courage, determination and endurance, but in a nuclear war they would count for nothing.’<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Alan Clark, ‘A Stake in Survival’ Sunday Times 25 March 1962.

<sup>122</sup> See, for instance, Grimond, Hansard, 30 January 1963, Vol. 670 994.

<sup>123</sup> See for instance, Watkinson, Hansard, 27 February 1961, Vol.635. 1207; Watkinson, Hansard, 30 January 1963, Vol.670. 989; Macmillan, Hansard, 30 January 1963, Vol.670. 967; Thorneycroft, Hansard, 31 January 1963, Vol.670. 1160-1161; Sir John Maitland, Hansard, 31 January 1963, Vol.670. 1212.

<sup>124</sup> John Hall, Hansard, 30 January 1963, Vol.670. 1018.

<sup>125</sup> Thorneycroft, Hansard, 31 January 1963, Vol.670. 1155.

<sup>126</sup> Smyth, Hansard, 2 November 1961, Vol.648. 453.

<sup>127</sup> Spearman, Hansard, 30 January 1963, Vol.670. 1007.



By the early 1960s it was apparent that some perceived the ‘thermonuclear age’ as having radically altered the context of defence in which Britain operated, undermining the principles of ‘independence in defence’ to which Britain had subscribed. While it was recognized that defence policy had generally been associated with arguments ‘....against mixing up our policies too closely with those of foreigners’ the nuclear era had definitively swung arguments ‘....right over to the other side....’<sup>128</sup> *The Sunday Times*, for example, argued that in ‘modern life’ no single nation, not even the United States, had sufficient ‘influence and power’ to stand alone.<sup>129</sup> The strength of Communist conventional forces was argued to render Britain dependent on its allies, particularly American naval power, for its defence; interdependence was thus perceived as the only viable form of national defence.<sup>130</sup>

Moreover, while the ‘foundation’ of British defence policy remained the theory of military independence, clinging to this principle served only to weaken the influence of Britain in NATO, whose governing principle was shared defence.<sup>131</sup> Some advocates of the deterrent, for instance, wished to see Britain develop its nuclear capabilities in conjunction with a collective Continental European deterrent, arguing that otherwise ‘....the day may come when Europe has a valid deterrent and America has a valid deterrent, and Britain enjoys splendid isolation with a fleet of ageing V bombers and a wastepaper basketful of plans.’<sup>132</sup>

Furthermore, recent historical experiences had begun to illustrate that Britain’s military independence was already becoming an illusion. In 1960, for instance, *The*

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<sup>128</sup> ‘The Moral of Blue Streak’ *The Economist* (23 April 1960).

<sup>129</sup> ‘Search for Unity’ *Sunday Times* 9 April 1961. See also Smyth, *Hansard*, 31 January 1963, Vol.670. 1173.

<sup>130</sup> Dingle Foot, *Hansard*, 31 January 1963, Vol.670. 1170.

<sup>131</sup> ‘Way Forward’ *News Chronicle* 17 April 1960.

<sup>132</sup> ‘The Moral of Blue Streak’ *The Economist* 23 April 1960. See also D. Foot, *Hansard*, 31 January 1963, Vol.670. 1168.



*Spectator* complained that Suez had proved that ‘....without American support we could not sustain the most tin-pot of campaigns for more than three days.’<sup>133</sup> The same year *The Economist* commented that ‘....the Suez episode showed that we could not go it alone even in conventional war, if the rest of Western opinion did not march resolutely on our side.’<sup>134</sup> Britain’s pursuit of the ‘....will o’ the wisp of independent power politics....’ had, therefore, led only to ‘....the humiliation of Suez.’<sup>135</sup>

Britain’s rejection from the EEC in 1963 further contributed to a sense that the international context was changing. The failure of the Brussels negotiations, combined with Britain’s decision to purchase Polaris from the United States after the cancellation of Skybolt were seen by one Member of the House as creating

....an altogether more fluid situation in relation to the defence policy of this country than I have known in my political life-time....I do not think there has ever been a time, as there is now, when one could say that things are bound to be very different in the years ahead....<sup>136</sup>

For many, it was consequently time to recognize that ‘....the conceptions of weapons, defence, economics...and all the rest have long since outgrown the old national conceptions and national boundaries.’<sup>137</sup>

However, a growing recognition of the need for interdependence in defence did not automatically determine that this interdependence would be sought in a primarily European context. The ‘special relationship’ with the United States, combined with a lingering sense of distinctiveness from the European continent, competed with arguments in favour of closer ties with Europe. This competition was increasingly pertinent with the backdrop of negotiations for British entry to the EEC (see Chapter Four).

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<sup>133</sup> Christopher Hills, ‘Ten Years of NATO’ *The Spectator* 1 January 1960.

<sup>134</sup> ‘The Moral of Blue Streak’ *The Economist* 23 April 1960.

<sup>135</sup> ‘This Ends Our Big Rocket Business’ *Express* 18 April 1960.

<sup>136</sup> Hart, *Hansard*, 30 January 1963, Vol.670. 1037.

<sup>137</sup> John Hynd, *Hansard*, 1963 31 January, col.1216.

## CONCLUSION

An examination of press and parliamentary defence debates from the early 1960s reveals the self-perception of a country that expected to exert an influence it was entitled to, an influence it considered to be of moral value. In order for this morally beneficial influence to be exerted, Britain herself had to be preserved, both physically and in terms of the maintenance of her independence. Similarly, Britain was a repository for freedom and democracy; two values that were threatened by the Soviet threat and which also had to be preserved. This preservation was safeguarded by the spirit of resistance to external threat that had proved itself over generations and also in part by Britain's island status, although the latter was coming under threat from the changing strategic context.

It should be apparent that the traits of greatness and superiority (exemplified by a belief in the right to influence), moral mission, martial virtue, freedom, democracy and island status, which were all forged in large part in the context of defence, were embedded in British national mentality to the point that they were appealed to in support of different and often competing policies. Defence thus provided a vibrant context for the development of British national identity, but also for the reflection of national traits and characteristics embedded in British national mentality. Moreover, defence was influential in shaping Britain's perception of her relationships with Europe and the United States, both in terms of historical experience and in terms of a changing contemporary strategic landscape. The extent to which Britain's national mentality and her experiences of defence influenced British 'European identities' has been touched upon above, and is examined in more detail in the following chapter.



# CHAPTER FOUR – BRITAIN AND EUROPE: SUPERIOR SPECIFICITY

## PAST EXPERIENCES AND CONTEMPORARY IMPERATIVES OF DEFENCE

### INTRODUCTION

#### *Defence – Bridging the Gap with Europe?*

Chapters Two and Three argued that defence played a prominent role in the construction of a British identity founded in part on a sense of greatness and superiority to Europe. Nevertheless, in the early 1960s, there were signs that Britain was moving closer to Europe in the sphere of defence. In 1961, for example, the Minister of Defence, Harold Watkinson, announced that Britain would allot its strategic reserve to European defence first, and to other commitments second, a decision *The Observer* welcomed as ‘overdue and significant.’<sup>1</sup> Similarly, the decision to replace Watkinson with an allegedly more pro-European Peter Thorneycroft was portrayed by *The Guardian* as a ‘fundamental change’ of defence policy revealing the ‘...European current of Cabinet opinion.’<sup>2</sup>

Rather than just reflecting moves towards Europe, defence was also perceived by some as fundamental to bridging the gap between Britain and the Continent. In April 1960, for example, *The Economist* argued that British defence and ‘nuclear know-how’ were so important to her allies that ‘...there is no reason why a British approach to Europe should be rebuffed. Even the firmest continental believers in keeping Britain out of the Common Market consider Britain’s contribution to defence indispensable.’<sup>3</sup> The same year, *The Times* wrote:

There is nothing so likely to bind nations together as joint arrangements for defence. If we could make the Western European Union a living organism, we should be taking a decisive step towards European Union. We should also

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<sup>1</sup> Anthony Verrier, ‘Defence and Tradition’ *The Observer* 17 September 1961.

<sup>2</sup> Leonard Beaton, ‘Europeans to Run Defence: Mr. Watkinson Not Included’ *Guardian* 14 July 1962.

<sup>3</sup> ‘The Moral of Blue Streak’ *The Economist* 23 April 1960.

be doing what is necessary to face a future in which neither we nor any of our European partners can single-handed meet the requirements of our own defence.<sup>4</sup>

After General de Gaulle's 1963 rejection of British membership in the EEC, however, the relationship between defence and British entry into Europe took on a more negative hue. For some, Britain's decision to purchase Polaris from the United States instead of pursuing a European nuclear deterrent definitively evidenced Britain's sense of distinctiveness from Europe and superiority within NATO, and contributed to the breakdown of Britain's EEC entry negotiations.<sup>5</sup>

### *Winners and Losers*

Moreover, debate from the period suggests that Britain's past experiences of defence influenced the decision to abandon a European deterrent in favour of cooperation with the United States because, in the sphere of defence, 'unconquered' Britain identified more readily with the United States than with 'defeated' Europe. For example, Britain's 'historical record as an ally of the United States' was contrasted favorably to that of other Western European States, who had been America's 'foes' during the First and Second World Wars.<sup>6</sup> Interestingly, it was argued that Britain had given '...blood and tears fighting *for* [not with] the French....[emphasis added].'<sup>7</sup> In 1963 it was even suggested that de Gaulle might have vetoed British entry to the EEC because he could not forgive Britain for having '...twice *dragged out of ruin* the country to which General de Gaulle is wholeheartedly and most honourably devoted [emphasis added].'<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> 'Need for Union in Europe' *The Times* 15 August 1960.

<sup>5</sup> John Hynd, *Hansard*, 31 January 1963, Vol.670. 1218. See also Wolfram Kaiser, 'The Bomb and Europe: Britain, France, and the EEC Entry Negotiations 1961-1963' *Journal of European Integration History* 11 (1) (1995), pp.65-85.

<sup>6</sup> A.J.Irvine, *Hansard*, 13 December 1960, cols..288-289.

<sup>7</sup> Sir Arthur Vere Harvey, *Hansard*, 30 January 1963, Vol.670. 1065.

<sup>8</sup> Woodrow Wyatt, *Hansard*, 31 January 1963, Vol.670. 1182.



*Defence Remains a Link*

Nevertheless, even after France's 1963 veto, some Members of Parliament continued to perceive defence as a means to maintain and strengthen British ties to Europe. One Member emphasized the importance of Britain doing all it could to '....hold Europe together ... *and one vital field which can help towards this is, of course, defence* [emphasis added].'<sup>9</sup> Similarly, it was suggested that Britain could use the Brussels Treaty as

....an instrument ...to maintain and build up our own direct contacts with the Five [who were perceived as 'isolated' from France] on the basis of a defence policy....surely we should consider whether we can build up this link and offer them this opportunity of a constant contact with us on this basis....<sup>10</sup>

In effect, the centrality of defence to Britain's relationship with Europe was noted by several Members of Parliament in the wake of Britain's rejection from Europe. As one member of the Opposition declared: 'I am one who believes that it is no accident that those who went wrong on defence, for whatever reason, also went wrong on the Common Market, for *the two things are completely tied together* [emphasis added].'<sup>11</sup> Indeed, '....the *negotiations and the concept of the political unity of the Six in Europe were much more closely linked to the military policy of Europe as a whole, and of this country in particular, than ...generally realized....*[emphasis added]'<sup>12</sup> This chapter proceeds to examine British conceptualizations of Europe in order to explore these 'links' between defence, Britain and her 'European identity.'

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<sup>9</sup> Gordon Walker, *Hansard*, 31 January 1963, Vol.670. 1152.

<sup>10</sup> Hynd, *Hansard*, 31 January 1963, Vol.670. 1222.

<sup>11</sup> George Wigg, *Hansard*, 31 January 1963, Vol.670. 1202.

<sup>12</sup> Judith Hart, *Hansard*, 30 January 1963, Vol.670. 1038, indicating her agreement with statements made by Aubrey Jones M.P. in an earlier defence debate.

**DEFENCE, IDENTITY AND BRITISH CONCEPTIONS OF EUROPE: UTILITARIAN VISIONS**

The overwhelming impression that emerges from an examination of British debate on Europe is that Britain perceived the EEC in distinctly utilitarian and unemotional terms. In this context, Europe's identity was not cast in terms of sentimental attachments, but rather presented in relation to opportunities for economic gain, or an increase in British influence.

**Greatness*****Europe as a Vehicle for British Influence and Greatness***

As discussed in Chapters Two and Three, a sense of specificity and superiority had been engrained in British identity in large measure through Britain's experiences in the realm of defence. This sense of superiority encouraged a belief in an inherent right to influence that lent itself to the perception of Europe as a vehicle for the exercise of British influence.

For advocates of accession, Britain's global influence was dwindling, and only entry in the EEC could halt its decline. Failure to join could only result in a loss of influence and standing. *The New Statesman* espoused this view as early as 1960, arguing that Britain outside the EEC would risk '....becoming an economic backwater and eventually losing such political influence as it still retains.'<sup>13</sup> The following year an Opposition Amendment warned of the "....political and economic isolation facing this country if it remains out of the European Community, and [...] the corresponding threat to Great Britain's future influence...."<sup>14</sup> Members in favour of British entry to the Community argued that in the EEC Britain would be able to maintain her '....prestige and

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<sup>13</sup> 'Last Chance' *New Statesman*, 21 May 1960. See also John Yeo 'Letter to the Editor: Leadership and Britain's Future' *The Guardian* 28 January 1963.

<sup>14</sup> Roy Jenkins, citing the Opposition amendment to the Government's motion on the European Economic Community June 28 1961 *Hansard*, Vol.643. 524.



influence in Europe...’ and increase her ‘...general influence throughout the world.’<sup>15</sup> The ‘days of Rudyard Kipling’ were gone,<sup>16</sup> and Britain had to recognize that it was only through the EEC that Britain could ‘...still play a leading role in Europe, in Africa and the world.’<sup>17</sup> As one member expressed it in 1962,

If the British wish to influence things, with the mature political understanding of give-and-take which we have learned in the House and throughout the country, the best way is by getting into the Common Market and contributing to their counsels.<sup>18</sup>

Independence, therefore, was all well and good, but not as an end to itself, and certainly not if pursuing independence at any expense led to a reduction in British influence and power.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, a failure to recognize the implications of being ‘left behind’ by Europe could result in the British facing ‘...perhaps our greatest national disaster – we shall be ignored.’<sup>20</sup> If, instead, Britain could adapt and enter the European Community, she would be accomplishing ‘...something which no other country or imperial Power has ever done, that is, adjust ourselves to the changing scale of the times so that we may continue to be an effective force in the world.’<sup>21</sup>

Opportunities were also perceived for the exercise of British influence *within*, as opposed to *through*, the EEC. It was becoming increasingly apparent to some that *institutional* Europe would soon be the voice of Europe at large. Britain, it was argued, should be part of the Community in order to ‘...strengthen and modulate that voice...’<sup>22</sup> The Community was a ‘new and important’ organization in whose councils Britain should have ‘...the opportunity to play her part and exercise her influence...’<sup>23</sup> As *The Sunday*

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<sup>15</sup> J. Grimond, *Hansard*, 6 June 1962, Vol.661. 562.

<sup>16</sup> Gilbert Longden, *Hansard*, 28 June 1961, Vol.643. 536.

<sup>17</sup> ‘Waiting for Whatnot’ *The Sunday Times* 18 June 1961.

<sup>18</sup> John Diamond, *Hansard*, 8 November 1962, Vol.666. 1234.

<sup>19</sup> ‘Last Chance’ *New Statesman* 21 May 1960

<sup>20</sup> John Yeo, Letter to the Editor: Leadership and Britain’s Future *The Guardian* 28 January 1963.

<sup>21</sup> Sir Richard Nugent, *Hansard*, 7 November 1962, Vol.666. 1031.

<sup>22</sup> Longden, *Hansard*, 28 June 1961, Vol.643. 535.

<sup>23</sup> Duncan Sandys, *Hansard*, 11 February 1963, Vol.671. 1065.



*Times* declared in 1962, Britain could use its influence to decisively ‘guide’ Europe’s future ‘from the inside’ instead of being ‘...drawn bleating along outside, like Mary’s little lamb, bound wherever they go.’<sup>24</sup>

Britain, then, sought to exert influence on and through, rather than with Europe, either through increased economic strength, or simply by becoming active in an increasingly influential body. Neither option represented a sense of common bonds with the Continent, but rather a perception of opportunity to be seized.

### *Europe as a Barrier to Influence and Destiny*

Counter-arguments to British accession to the EEC were also often grounded in relation to British influence. While advocates of accession believed that British influence could be preserved in Europe, critics believed that Britain’s influence could not be limited to the European sphere. Historically, it was argued, ‘England’ had tried to fulfill her destiny in Europe, but this had led only to frustration and disappointment.<sup>25</sup> Only when England’s attempt to rule France in the Middle Ages had ‘....ended in failure and disillusionment....’ had the British people found ‘....in the oceans the true outlet for their energies.’<sup>26</sup>

Thus, it almost seemed pre-ordained that Britain had a ‘....role to play in issues going far beyond Europe’, issues which she perceived ‘....not through European eyes but through eyes whose vision has been sharpened by years of active partnership in the greatest multi-racial system in the world.’<sup>27</sup> Europe was just one of three ‘intersecting circles’ of British foreign policy interests, coming third behind the Commonwealth and the United States.<sup>28</sup> Britain’s influence thus had to be exerted on a far broader scale than

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<sup>24</sup> ‘Forward into Europe’ *The Sunday Times* Sunday 15 April 1962.

<sup>25</sup> Sir Arthur Bryant, ‘The British Nations and their Heritage’ (undated, untitled) IISS Files EC/3 3811

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Harold Wilson, *Hansard*, 7 November 1962, Vol.666. 1282.

<sup>28</sup> Sir Hamilton Kerr, *Hansard*, 11 February 1963, Vol.671. 1002-1003.



Europe. As *The Observer* wrote in 1962: ‘We need to fashion *world* institutions which can increase stability and reduce danger as our world society inexorably grows [emphasis added.]’; the question was whether Britain could successfully do so as a member of the European Community.<sup>29</sup>

Given all Britain’s wider roles and concerns, one critic indignantly asked, ‘Is it Britain’s destiny to be federated in a buffer State of Western Europe?’<sup>30</sup> Britain could not remain at the center of the Commonwealth and become a ‘....province of Europe. For whatever we may say, that is really what federation means.’<sup>31</sup> Nor could Britain sign up to an agreement that limited her international influence, something which would be ‘....profoundly wrong and dangerous for the British people and for their destiny in the world.’<sup>32</sup>

For some, Britain could therefore only join the EEC if the latter evolved to incorporate Britain’s ‘wider context’, because all of Britain’s history had been outward-looking, ‘....indeed, looking to the whole world as a platform of her operations.’<sup>33</sup> For others, the prospect of British entry into the EEC was distinctly more uninspiring, there was no purpose in ‘....sacrificing our real function and importance in the world in order to achieve something so doubtful and so debatable and so ambiguous.’<sup>34</sup>

The French veto in 1963 appeared to confirm that Britain had been heading in the wrong direction by contemplating closer association with Europe. James Callaghan for instance declared, ‘[w]e were putting our energies the whole time into Europe when there

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<sup>29</sup> ‘Britain, The Heretic of Europe’ *The Observer* 8 April 1962.

<sup>30</sup> John Biggs-Davison, *Hansard*, 28 June 1961, Vol.643. .575.

<sup>31</sup> Hugh Gaitskell, *Hansard*, 7 November 1962, Vol.666. 1019.

<sup>32</sup> Gaitskell, *Hansard*, 7 November 1962, Vol.666. 1023.

<sup>33</sup> ‘Europe’ *Observer* 25 June 1961; R. II. Turton, *Hansard*, 12 February 1963, Vol. 671. 1186.

<sup>34</sup> Sydney Silverman, *Hansard*, 7 June 1962, Vol. 661. 771-2

were far more things to be done in other countries.’<sup>35</sup> The sentiment that Britain’s ‘destiny’ lay beyond Europe thus continued to punctuate commentary on Europe.

### **Mission**

Nevertheless, both critics and advocates of British accession to the EEC commented on the beneficial moral influence that Britain could exert on the European Community. The EEC, for example, needed ‘....lifting into the wider context of the British oceanic achievement and of that great union of hearts, history and common interest which has grown out of our global expansion – our supreme contribution to the European heritage.’<sup>36</sup>

Similarly, the economic benefits of the Community were portrayed as advantageous not just to Britain, but also to Britain’s wider responsibilities in the Commonwealth. As the Foreign Secretary declared in an article in *The Times* in June 1961, the EEC was a means for Britain to continue her “....particular duty to the Commonwealth and general duty to help those who are less well off.”<sup>37</sup> The British people, moreover, had a ‘....mission still, to give leadership without dictation and guidance without coercion.’<sup>38</sup>

The question of global moral obligations also served to bolster the arguments of critics of British accession to the Community. Such critics argued that it was by preserving Britain’s global connection, and by strengthening the Commonwealth, that Britain would be ‘....raising the standard of living of millions of people throughout the

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<sup>35</sup> James Callaghan, *Hansard*, 12 February 1963, Vol.671. 1125.

<sup>36</sup> Bryant ‘The British Nations’ IISS Files EC/3 3811

<sup>37</sup> Lord Home in ‘New Relationship with Europe’ *The Times* 17 June 1961.

<sup>38</sup> Walker-Smith, *Hansard*, 11 February 1963, Vol.671. 987-988.



world and making a contribution towards the peace of the world.’<sup>39</sup> Indeed it was Britain’s global position that enabled her to exert a moral global influence:

It is from *that special and separate position* that Britain has *served the interests of Europe and the world* over the centuries and has contributed mightily to their well being....Tell the Six that we wish them well and that we want the maximum co-operation with them which is compatible with our own independent sovereignty and duty to the Commonwealth. Remind them of the difference between our position and theirs, and tell them that *we do not wish to renounce our heritage but to use it for the common good* [emphasis added].<sup>40</sup>

### *Absence of a European Mission*

Indeed, in arguments both in favour and against British accession to the EEC a notion of British moral superiority to, and separation from, the continent was in evidence. The relevance and significance of deeper ties within Europe were generally negated, or postulated in terms of potential obstacles that Britain would need to overcome once she acceded to the EEC. Neither advocates nor critics of British accession to the EEC perceived the existence of a national mission for Britain in Europe. Nor did advocates and critics alike express a belief in a cultural or spiritual mission for Europe as a whole.

### *An Economic Entity*

Instead, the majority of arguments for Britain’s entry to the Common Market rested on economic, rather than political or idealistic, bases. For example, thirteen pages of Edward Heath’s November 1962 speech setting out Britain’s intention to negotiate entry to the Community centered wholly on the economic implications of membership for Britain.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, rising food prices, the economy and shipping were presented as the ‘great issues’ of the accession debate.<sup>42</sup> Even one of the most steadfast supporters of

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<sup>39</sup> Turton, *Hansard*, 12 February 1963, Vol. 671. 1186.

<sup>40</sup> Walker-Smith, *Hansard*, 7 June 1962, Vol.661. 1512 -1514.

<sup>41</sup> Speech by Edward Heath, Lord Privy Seal, *Hansard*, 7 November 1962, Vol.666, starting 975.

<sup>42</sup> Viscount Lambton, *Hansard*, 8 November 1962, Vol.666. 1256.



British entry emphasized how Britain's 'stagnant economy' stood to benefit from accession to the Community.<sup>43</sup>

The political implications of the EEC were thus generally downplayed in favour of its economic aspects. Edward Heath, M.P., for example, who was charged by the Prime Minister Macmillan with negotiating Britain's entry to the EEC, emphasized that the Treaty of Rome was fundamentally '...concerned only with the economic and the customs union... There is no provision in the Treaty of Rome for political union. It can, therefore, be established only by a new treaty – and a new treaty which is agreed unanimously.'<sup>44</sup> Elsewhere, specific references were made to the 'challenges' that the political dimension of Europe posed to Britain's '...political inventiveness and ingenuity'<sup>45</sup>, an almost *de facto* implication that Britain would somehow have to find a way to minimize the impact of Europe's political dimension.

### *A Reluctant Marriage*

In effect, Britain seemed to be approaching the prospect of accession to the EEC somewhat reluctantly. In the opinion of the *New York Times*, Britain was

...like a confirmed bachelor approaching a marriage of convenience...there is no love in the old boy's heart...Even Prime Minister Macmillan, who is piloting the Queen's Government across the stormy channel, cannot avoid an occasional sigh of regret.<sup>46</sup>

This reluctant outlook on Europe was similarly expressed in the House of Commons in 1962:

It might well be that we should go in, but for heaven's sake do not let us declare ourselves too openly until we know the price we have to pay. It seems to me rather like sending a horse to a sale at which it is known there is likely to be only one bidder and letting it be known that one will sell that horse at any price.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Roy Jenkins, *Hansard*, 28 June 1961, Vol.643. 543.

<sup>44</sup> Edward Heath, *Hansard*, 7 November 1962, Vol.666. 997-998.

<sup>45</sup> Aubrey Jones, *Hansard*, 6 June 1962, Vol.661. 537.

<sup>46</sup> 'Marriage of Convenience – John Bull and Bardot' *The New York Times* 13 December 1961.

<sup>47</sup> Sir J. Barlow, *Hansard*, 7 November 1962, Vol.666. 1246.



Any idealistic ‘European identities’ thus seemed lacking in British conceptions of the EEC. Rarely were suggestions made of a common bond or intrinsic link placing Britain in the European identity sphere. A question that naturally arises, however, is *why* Britain’s conception of Europe should have been so lacking in sentimental attachment?

## **Military Virtue**

### ***Moral Primacy Proven by Defence***

A compelling answer is that Britain’s experiences of defence had contributed to entrenching a national identity founded in large measure on a sense of specificity and superiority to Europe. British national traits and characteristics had been reinforced in such a context that they accentuated a sense of separation from the Continent. This sense of separation limited the degree to which even advocates of accession could conceptualize Europe on idealistic and visionary lines.

As discussed in previous chapters, Britain’s sense of greatness and special right to influence were tied to the concept of superior British morality, a facet of British identity that had historically been influenced by Britain’s relationship with defence. In this context too, a sense of British superiority to, and detachment from, continental Europe was evident.

Britain, for example, was implicitly portrayed as superior to the conflict-ridden Continent, where repression and instability were rife. Thus, where Europe was a source of war and political upheaval, Britain had only ever been ‘drawn into’ European instability against her will, a factor that differentiated her from the Continent.<sup>48</sup> When required to, of course, Britain had not shied away from involvement, but she had

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<sup>48</sup> Bellenger, Hansard, 6 June 1962, Vol.661. 539.

‘....never cared for entanglement in Europe....’<sup>49</sup> and had ‘....tried often enough in the past to keep out....’<sup>50</sup> Conflict between France and Germany, however, had ‘involved’ Britain ‘willy nilly...in two devastating wars.’<sup>51</sup>

### *Europe as a Construct of the Defeated*

This sense of separateness was reinforced in the context of defence, which seemingly confirmed Britain’s moral superiority to the Continent. Both before and after the collapse of EEC negotiations, Britain’s sense of greatness and right to influence conflicted with the notion of ‘integration’, which appeared unworthy of Britain’s global role and status. The prospect of political subjugation by the Community was even more galling given the perception that it was a construct of defeated Europe, whereas Britain remained militarily unvanquished. This was explicitly stated in the House of Commons in 1962;

Let us not forget that the concept of a United Europe was a concept of the defeated and the occupied. One of the reasons why Great Britain and the neutral countries stood aside was that we with the satisfaction of victory and the neutrals with the satisfaction of abstinence felt that we had the power and the authority to go our own way pursuing our own policies and our own courses.<sup>52</sup>

### *Negotiations as an Affront to Dignity*

Indeed, for some, the very need to petition for entry into the ‘European’ club conflicted with a British notion of influential and global superiority. The dissatisfaction with Britain’s position as an applicant for membership was well illustrated by critics’ use of the term ‘suppliants’<sup>53</sup> to describe Britain’s position in the EEC negotiations; the term implicitly accused the Government of placing Britain in an improper position of

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<sup>49</sup> ‘The Need for Union in Europe’ *The Times* 15 August 1960.

<sup>50</sup> Sir Alexander Spearman, *Hansard*, 6 June 1962 Vol. 661. 594.

<sup>51</sup> Bellenger *Hansard*, 6 June 1962, Vol. 661. 539.

<sup>52</sup> Maurice Goelman, *Hansard*, 6 June 1962, Vol.661. 589-590.

<sup>53</sup> See, for instance, George Brown, *Hansard*, 8 November 1962, Vol.666. 1184 and Wilson, *Hansard*, 11 February 1963, Vol.671. 967-968.



humiliation and inferiority. In debate on British accession, historical experiences were transposed to the contemporary political setting. Defensive imagery was prominent in the language of critics who accused the Government of contemplating terms of accession ‘dictated’ to Britain in Brussels that equated to ‘national humiliation’ and of driving Britain ‘....into a position where there may be no alternative to unconditional surrender.’<sup>54</sup> ‘The fight is over’ declared another Opposition member, ‘The right hon. Gentleman has capitulated to the interests of the Six, and all he is asking now is for marginal modifications of his surrender terms....’<sup>55</sup>

Similar perceptions were evident following the French veto of Britain’s application. Having condescended to apply for entry, only to be refused, Britain now emphasized the retention of dignity and the avoidance of further rejection. Some critics discouraged the idea of future applications on the basis that one refusal might be ‘painful’, but a second would be ‘humiliating’.<sup>56</sup> Once again, the language adopted by Members of Parliament was suggestive of a sense of British superiority and separateness from Europe born in the context of defence. Critics of the EEC negotiations, for example, perceived it as ‘....*humiliating* that this country should have been going with a *begging bowl* to countries which we either liberated or defeated in the last war.’<sup>57</sup>

Whereas Britain’s demeanour had previously been suggestive of a reluctant bachelor walking towards the aisle, the metaphor was now reversed; persisting in negotiations would be ‘unworthy’ of Britain’s position, as after all, ‘[n]o girl of high spirit would entertain so hesitant or half-hearted a suitor.’<sup>58</sup> Left at the altar, Britain should certainly not scamper after the groom; as one Member declared: ‘I hope...that it will be

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<sup>54</sup> Wilson, *Hansard*, 13 December 1962, Vol.669. 673.

<sup>55</sup> Barbara Castle, *Hansard*, 13 December 1962, Vol.669. 685.

<sup>56</sup> Ian Walker-Smith, *Hansard*, 11 February 1963, Vol.671. 982.

<sup>57</sup> F. Blackburn, *Hansard*, 11 February 1963, Vol.671. 999.

<sup>58</sup> Walker-Smith, *Hansard*, 11 February 1963, Vol.671. 982.

made quite clear that we are allowing our application to lapse, that we are not expecting it to be furthered, that we wish the E.E.C. well, and that we are not going to try to break into their club again.<sup>59</sup>

Indeed, Britain, it was argued, should only seek accession again if the time came when the Six were willing to ‘.... *modify their structure so as to meet our conditions...then they will make an initiative to us which takes account of our special position, of our sovereignty and of the Commonwealth.*’<sup>60</sup>

## Freedom

Britain’s ‘special position’ was also in large measure founded on Britain’s ‘tradition’ of freedom, a tradition that had been preserved through successful defence, and that critics of accession believed to be threatened by prospective membership of the EEC. Historically and contemporarily, an association between Britain and freedom thus fostered a sense of specificity and superiority from Europe in British mentality.

### *Defending British Freedom from Continental Repression*

The impact of defence was prominent in crystallizing distinctions between ‘freedom’ in Britain and ‘repression’ on the Continent. In British debate, projects for European unity were often linked to projects for European domination by a single state, and a consciousness of Britain’s role in defending herself *and* Europe against oppression encouraged a contraposition of British and European identity. Analogies were drawn, for instance, between President de Gaulle’s plans for Europe and those of Hitler and

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<sup>59</sup> Stonehouse, Hansard, 12 February 1963, Vol. 671. 1191.

<sup>60</sup> Walker-Smith, Hansard, 11 February 1963, Vol.671. 981-982.



Napoleon.<sup>61</sup> In contrast, Britain, had ‘... twice in our time *saved Europe from being enslaved* by a military dictatorship [emphasis added].’<sup>62</sup>

Moreover, it was the ‘complete freedom of parliamentary sovereignty’ that was argued to have preserved Britain from the ‘oppression’ faced by European peoples on the continent, and which had thus ‘...distinguished us from our Continental neighbours.’<sup>63</sup> Those who advocated British entry were accused of being ‘...willing, nay, anxious, pleading, to be allowed to sell the major passes of British interest and *British freedom* [emphasis added].’<sup>64</sup>

Accession to the EEC seemed to threaten both British freedom and her ability to defend freedom beyond her shores. Critics of accession feared that domestically, the ‘individual life of the British citizen’ would become bound by the ‘collective will of the Community’, while internationally, Britain would have ‘...accepted a position in which we were not even free to make an independent intervention in international affairs...’<sup>65</sup> Britain therefore ‘...consciously or subconsciously...’ tended to ‘...view with repugnance any abdication of our sovereign rights.’<sup>66</sup>

Interestingly, however, the vision of a politically unstable and repressed Continent was also present in appeals for British entry to the EEC. Britain, it was argued, had never been able to remain insulated from Europe’s problems, nor could staying out of the Community guarantee immunity from Europe’s instability; perhaps the answer lay in

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<sup>61</sup> Desmond Donnelly, Hansard, 11 February 1963, Vol.671. 1008. See also William Rees-Mogg, ‘Looking Beyond de Gaulle’s Veto’ The Sunday Times 20 January 1963.

<sup>62</sup> Bryant, ‘The British Nations’ IISS Files EC/3 3811. For advocates of British accession, however, a British presence in the EEC could contribute to a political defence of the freedom of Europe from the onslaught of a French-dominated vision; see for instance, ‘Where Britain Stands’ The Sunday Times 27 January 1963.

<sup>63</sup> Bryant ‘The British Nations’ IISS Files EC/3 3811

<sup>64</sup> Castle, Hansard, 13 December 1962, Vol.669. 692.

<sup>65</sup> Silverman, Hansard, 7 June 1962, Vol. 661. 771-2

<sup>66</sup> ‘The Need for Union in Europe’ The Times 15 August 1960.

influencing Europe from the inside.<sup>67</sup> Britain, it was argued, ‘....with its stable institutions...’ was ‘... a very important factor in preventing the return of dictatorships and preserving democracy.’<sup>68</sup>

As *The New Statesman* claimed, in the Cold War environment, the absence of Britain’s stabilizing and restraining influence on the unstable regimes of Europe ‘....might be disastrous for the world as well as ourselves.’<sup>69</sup> Similarly *The Sunday Times* observed that Britain’s ‘....parliamentary tradition and rich parliamentary experience....’ were thus ‘....perhaps the most valuable part of the dowry that Britain brings with her to this European marriage.’<sup>70</sup> Even critics of British accession acknowledged that ‘....by joining Western Europe we [Britain] might help to save its peoples from their recurrent tendency to fall prey to despotism.’<sup>71</sup>

Defence thus continued to paradoxically impact arguments both in favour of and against European integration. Britain’s experiences of defence reinforced a sense of separation from the Continent while a sense of defensive mission – albeit founded in superiority – provided a link to Europe.

## Democracy

Divergences in British and European experiences of defence were instrumental in reinforcing the perception of irreconcilable political differences between Britain and the Continent. Even advocates of closer ties with Europe perceived that the founding states of the European Community were less attached than Britain to the principle of sovereignty, because sovereignty had proved irrelevant in protecting them from foreign

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<sup>67</sup> Spearman, *Hansard*, 6 June 1962, Vol. 661 594.

<sup>68</sup> A. Woodburn, *Hansard*, 7 November 1962, Vol. 666. 1035.

<sup>69</sup> ‘Last Chance’ *New Statesman* 21 May 1960.

<sup>70</sup> ‘Forward into Europe’ *The Sunday Times*, 15 April 1962.

<sup>71</sup> Bryant ‘The British Nations’ IISS Files EC/3 3811.



occupation during the Second World War.<sup>72</sup> Britain's experience was diametrically opposed; Britain's successful defence had dramatically reinforced the perceived value of independence, and the idea persisted that neither defence nor independence might have been possible had Britain been part of a federal military or political structure.<sup>73</sup>

Moreover, the fact that Britain had never been occupied was argued to have 'insulated' her from the fundamental concerns of the continental Europeans, who were '....desperately anxious to find some way of preventing further wars and the rise of other dictators' while the British were '....not as alarmed about this as people on the Continent'<sup>74</sup> and were consequently less likely to subscribe to the principles of integration.

Britain could thus be an ally to Europe in time of need, but not a part of Europe itself. As one opponent of British entry declared:

What may be good for them is not necessarily good for us. The reason for that lies in our history and institutions and in that *special kind of separate position which time and the toil of our forefathers have built up for us....*[emphasis added].<sup>75</sup>

### ***Defending Democracy and Political Specificity***

This separate and special position rested in part on the belief in a distinctive evolution of Britain's democratic institutions- a distinction that had been preserved through Britain's successful defence against attempts at European hegemony (see Chapters Two and Three). Britain and Europe were divided by the 'wholly different development' of their legal and administrative systems.<sup>76</sup> While Parliamentary sovereignty and the rule of law were for Britain the '....twin pillars of our Constitution and our way of life....', Parliament was argued to be less important to the existing

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<sup>72</sup> 'The Need for Union in Europe' The Times 15 August 1960.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> Woodburn, Hansard, 7 November 1962, Vol.666. 1034-1035

<sup>75</sup> Walker-Smith, , Hansard, 7 June 1962, Vol.661. 1512 -1514.

Community Members, whose systems were based on ‘....the general acceptance of Roman Law.’<sup>77</sup> The emphasis on differences in institutional heritage, moreover, meant that could be perceived as more ‘natural’ for Continental states to relinquish sovereignty in the name of European union than for Britain. Some critics of accession, for instance, claimed that national citizenship could be more easily exchanged for European citizenship on the Continent than in Britain, because citizenship itself was a recent ‘innovation’ in countries like Germany, Italy, and Belgium.<sup>78</sup> Similarly, it was argued that sovereignty had been a ‘late acquisition’ for the Community states, which, as part of the Holy Roman Empire, had for centuries existed in the absence of the ‘modern doctrine of sovereignty’, while British national sovereignty, in contrast, ‘....did not follow that doctrine; it preceded it.’<sup>79</sup>

The six signatories of the Treaty of Rome thus had a common institutional background that was quite distinct from Britain’s, and which made European integration along political lines natural and appropriate for them, while for Britain it would be an aberration:

The Six share their constitutional outlook and practices with each other, but not with us. Their evolution has been Continental and collective. Ours has been insular and imperial. Therefore, *for them political union would be a reunion and a rediscovery, while for us it would be a departure and a divergence* [emphasis added].<sup>80</sup>

Constitutional differences between Britain and Europe were considered by some critics to be so fundamental that they could not be overcome by the modern technological advances that were making the world a smaller place, for they alone could not ‘....render

<sup>76</sup> Macmillan, Hansard, 7 June 1962, Vol.661. 1482.

<sup>77</sup> Walker-Smith, Hansard, 7 June 1962, Vol.661. 1512.

<sup>78</sup> ‘Do We Really Want to Become Europeans?’ The Tablet 5 August 1961.

<sup>79</sup> Walker-Smith, Hansard, 7 June 1962, Vol.661. 1512.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*



obsolete the constitutional heritage which the genius of our forefathers has bequeathed to us.’<sup>81</sup>

Indeed, Britain’s parliamentary traditions were perceived as providing greater common bonds between members of the Commonwealth than between Britain and the six member-states of the EEC. Britain was, in essence, ‘....the creator and center of a world-wide community of English-speaking peoples living under and wedded to free forms of government that evolved, not on the Continent, but here.’<sup>82</sup> It was with these people, and implicitly, not with Europeans, that Britain had ‘spiritual ties’.<sup>83</sup>

British membership of EEC thus appeared counter-intuitive to critics of accession, who feared the specter of political domination by a Europe that had not succeeded in dominating Britain militarily. The Prime Minister and his Government were accused of ‘jettisoning’ British sovereignty<sup>84</sup>, of ‘....setting out to maim the House of Commons....’ and of embarking on a process that would strip Parliament’s powers and hand them over to a Mussolini-style Commission that would dismantle democracy and eventually ‘take over’ Parliament and British Law.<sup>85</sup> The House of Commons would ‘....become almost an empty shell and democratic power will become a myth.’<sup>86</sup>

Nevertheless, after France vetoed British entry to the EEC, the ‘loss to Europe’ was framed in terms of the contribution Britain might have made to European democracy; ‘What we had to bring, above all, was the reality of parliamentary democracy, the experience that we in the House of Commons have had over hundreds of years....’<sup>87</sup> Once again, however, Britain’s parliamentary heritage implied a sense of British specificity that

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<sup>81</sup> Walker-Smith, Hansard, 7 June 1962, Vol.661. 1513.

<sup>82</sup> Bryant, ‘The British Nations’ IISS Files EC/3 3811

<sup>83</sup> Farey-Jones, Hansard, 31 July 1961 Vol.643. 942.

<sup>84</sup> Stonehouse, Hansard, 12 February 1963, Vol. 671. 1190.

<sup>85</sup> Frank Bowles, Hansard, 7 November 1962, Vol.666. 1050.

<sup>86</sup> Castle, Hansard, 13 December 1962, Vol.669. 691.

<sup>87</sup> Robert Matthew, Hansard, 12 February 1963, Vol.671. 1227.

was difficult to isolate from a general perception of superiority to, and distinction from, continental Europe.

## Independence

A sense of British separation from the Continent was both reflected in and encouraged by Britain's island status, a characteristic referred to by General de Gaulle in his justification of the French veto of British accession to the EEC in 1963.<sup>88</sup> This geographical trait appeared to embody a physical and spiritual separation that rendered Britain quite distinct from continental Europe.

For example, in a passionate written appeal against British entry to the European Union, one critic of British accession recounted the migrating 'seafarers' who came to 'this island', and from whom the British people derived their particular 'blood and instincts.'<sup>89</sup> Similarly, in an article tellingly titled 'Do We Really Want to Become Europeans' *The Tablet* recognised that the decision to enter the Community was much more difficult for the British, '....a people with so long a tradition of insularity, and a tradition of Empire and self-sufficiency, of sovereignty, and a superiority complex towards the mainland.'<sup>90</sup>

## *Security in Isolation*

Defence was a prominent influence in this regard. Indeed, it was argued that Britain itself had not been invaded for a thousand years, and that its inhabitants, in preserving the island from foreign conquest, had '....learnt to live together...and developed a strongly marked and insular national character....'<sup>91</sup> that separated Britain from Europe.

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<sup>88</sup> For a report on de Gaulle's perspective, see 'Icy Blast' *The Times* 15 January 1963.

<sup>89</sup> Bryant, 'The British Nations' IISS Files EC/3 3811

<sup>90</sup> 'Do We Really Want to Become Europeans?' *The Tablet* 5 August 1961.

<sup>91</sup> Bryant, 'The British Nations' IISS Files EC/3 3811



Moreover, Britain's past experiences of defence meant that a sense of British isolation from Europe did not necessarily hold negative connotations. As one critic of British accession dispassionately declared:

For my part, I would not be afraid of the word "isolation"...I remember when this country was last isolated...in June, 1940, and for the rest of the year...It was described by the then Prime Minister as this country's finest hour, and I believe that it was. If it had really been the truth that a united Europe was the overwhelming consideration, the overriding factor which we had to decided to justify, whether we remained isolated or not, in June, 1940, we had a united Europe, and it was the determination of this country that we should bring it to an end as soon as possible: and we did bring it to an end.<sup>92</sup>

This long tradition of isolation and insularity was thus a recurring theme in the House of Commons, even among supporters of British entry to the EEC, accentuating the sense of separation of Britain from the Continent, and restricting identification between the two.<sup>93</sup>

#### DEFENCE: A BASIS FOR BRITAIN'S EUROPEAN IDENTITY?

There was little then, in the parliamentary or press debates of the period, to suggest any sense of British sentimental attachment to Europe, or of a British 'European identity' based on emotional ties. Britain and Europe appeared quite distinct; Europe was a potential source of influence or economic revival *for* Britain; Britain could bring its moral and democratic influence to bear *on* Europe; unstable Europe drew Britain into *its* troubles and conflicts. Similarly references abounded to Britain's relations *with* Europe, or to Britain *and* Europe. A pamphlet promoted by the Prime Minister Macmillan was actually entitled 'Britain, the Commonwealth *and* Europe' [emphasis added].<sup>94</sup> In part this sense of separation derived from a notion of British superiority to the Continent that manifested itself in arguments both for and against entry to the EEC. This superiority

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<sup>92</sup> Silverman, *Hansard*, 28 June 1961, Vol.643. 525.

<sup>93</sup> See for instance Macmillan, *Hansard*, 7 June 1962, Vol.661. 1482; Macmillan, *Hansard*, 11 February 1963, Vol.671. 958.



stemmed from a belief in national traits and attributes that had been founded in the context of defence, but also from the impact of defence in accentuating the difference between defeated Europe and unconquered Britain. Perhaps at even only a subconscious level, Britain's 'chosenness' and right to be a nation appeared confirmed by the experiences of defence, whereas the legitimacy of European nations seemed to be diluted by defeat.

Yet in the post-war era, defence was also beginning to provide a context for a rapprochement of British and European identities. The wording of an Amendment debated by the House of Commons on 28 June 1961, underscored the importance of an external threat in Britain's decision to negotiate for membership of the European Economic Community. The Amendment proposed that, '*....conscious of the threat to the Free World....*' the House should support the Conservative Government's decision to pursue negotiations [emphasis added].<sup>95</sup> In announcing Britain's decision to negotiate for entry to the EEC, Prime Minister Macmillan explicitly placed the question of British accession in the context of '*....the enormous monolithic strength of Soviet power....*' warning of the 'great risks' entailed in remaining outside the Community.<sup>96</sup> The *Economist* recognised the significance of a common threat to the British government's perspective on entry into the EEC, speculating in 1961 that a deterioration in east-west relations in 1960 had driven British Prime Minister Macmillan, and German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer to consider greater European unity by presenting them with a 'sense of common danger.'<sup>97</sup> A year later, the Prime Minister reminded the country that geography

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<sup>94</sup> See Macmillan, *Hansard*, 7 November 1962, Vol.666. 1002

<sup>95</sup> Longden amendment, *Hansard*, 28 June 1961, Vol. 643. 519.

<sup>96</sup> Macmillan, *Hansard*, 31 July 1961, Vol.643. 936-937.

<sup>97</sup> 'The European Venture' *The Economist* 5 August 1961. The same article nonetheless questioned the value of a Europe integrated in the context of a common threat, remarking that '...[t]o rely on this negative force as the unifying factor would not only put the European negotiation at the mercy of Mr. Krushchev's



no longer protected Britain, and that throughout history, whenever the world had been threatened by ‘tyrants or aggression’, Britain had abandoned isolationism.’<sup>98</sup>

Some advocates of British entry therefore argued that security in the Cold War was indivisible for Britain as well as for the continental European states. Moreover, in the face of the overwhelming Soviet threat, it was no longer possible to identify certain parts of (Western) Europe as more or less tied to the security and defence of Britain:

In the old days we used to say that the integrity and independence of the Low Countries were vital to us. Surely the whole of Western Europe is now our “Low Countries”. The scale has changed. It is because this unity of Europe is so vital to our defence that Communists are solidly both against the Common Market and against our joining it.<sup>99</sup>

It seemed evident that no single European state could ‘single-handed’ meet the requirements of defence, and the United States, could not be expected to carry the burden for Europe’s defence indefinitely; ‘self-preservation’ thus demanded that the British ‘....should cast equivocation aside, take our courage in our hands, and work for a closer association with Europe.’<sup>100</sup>

Britain’s global trading connections might enable Britain to subsist economically apart from Europe, but Britain itself could not physically ‘....draw away defensively from neighbours across a very narrow sea. Our security and our political future are inexorably bound up with theirs.’<sup>101</sup> Therefore, while critics complained of the surrender of a thousand years of history, advocates of British membership in the Community retorted that in the nuclear age, it was the preservation of the future that was of concern, and that without unity such a future might well not come to pass.<sup>102</sup>

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power to blow hot or cold at will; it would also tend to stamp the end-product itself as a negative and defensive-minded thing.’

<sup>98</sup> Macmillan, *Hansard*, 7 June 1962, Vol.661. 1482-1483

<sup>99</sup> Nigel Birch, *Hansard*, 28 June 1961, Vol.643. 545.

<sup>100</sup> ‘Need for Union in Europe’ *The Times* 15 August 1960.

<sup>101</sup> ‘Forward into Europe’ *The Sunday Times* 15 April 1962.

<sup>102</sup> Spearman, *Hansard*, 7 November 1962, Vol.666. 1108.

It was, interestingly, only in the context of defence that any significant references were made to Britain as a part of Europe. The existence of the Soviet threat and an awareness of Britain's vulnerability in the nuclear era were perhaps the only factors to temper Britain's distinctness in relation to Europe. With the acknowledgment that Britain's freedom was 'inseparable' from that of Europe came the recognition that, Britain,

....whatever de Gaulle may say... [is a] European Power, no greater and no smaller than France or Western Germany, deeply and irrevocably committed to Europe's destiny, our freedom and our prosperity inseparable from the freedom and prosperity of Europe.<sup>103</sup>

Moreover, in the light of the political and military Communist threat, the interests and values of western civilization - largely based on democracy and freedom – were more easily perceived as shared between, and common to, Britain *and* Europe. Indeed, it was in relation to this 'splendid struggle' between East and West that Britain was 'included' in the definition of Europe.<sup>104</sup> The potential risks to Britain of entering the Community were consequently outweighed for some by the dangers of disunity in Europe. As one advocate of British accession declared: 'That is why I support the fundamental objective of the Rome Treaty, namely "to establish the foundation of an ever closing union among the European peoples." All of those peoples; we are one of them....',<sup>105</sup>

Defence was consequently one sphere in which Britain could conceive of limitations on her sovereignty. Indeed, the Western European Union and N.A.T.O. '....while providing for our defence in Europe, have meant some derogation of

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<sup>103</sup> 'Europe Still Calls' The Observer 10 February 1963.

<sup>104</sup> Longden, Hansard, 28 June 1961, Vol.643. 531-532

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*



sovereignty. The concept, therefore, of some loss of sovereignty is one which this country has been able to accept in these particular spheres.’<sup>106</sup>

It is was also in this vein that a more visionary conception of Europe was imagined; a Community comprising Britain, it was argued, would be capable of defending itself against the Soviet threat, but it would also be a Community ‘....occupying the fairest part of the surface of the earth. It would be a community comprising the most intelligent, the most inventive and the most hardworking populations in the world.’<sup>107</sup> Britain was thus ‘....part of Europe, geographically, culturally, and, *most decidedly, in matters of defence* [emphasis added].’<sup>108</sup>

Despite the influence of defence in shaping a greater sense of commonality between Britain and Europe, obstacles to a European British identity remained. For example, even in the context of defence Britain maintained emotive links with the Commonwealth countries that competed with its ties to Europe. The people of the Commonwealth had, for example, rallied to Britain, ‘....an effete and ageing lion....’ in two World Wars,<sup>109</sup> coming ‘....unasked to our aid, offering and staking their all.’<sup>110</sup> The British could ‘....never forgo our loyalties to the men who fought for us on every battlefield in two world wars....’<sup>111</sup> Britain and the Commonwealth thus shared a ‘....unity of purpose and sentiment....’<sup>112</sup> that challenged the European identity that was emerging in this sphere.

Conversely, General de Gaulle commented on the common defensive interests of the member-states of the EEC, which he implicitly defined as ‘European’ and

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<sup>106</sup> J.R. Godber, Hansard, 28 June 1961, Vol.643. 562.

<sup>107</sup> Birch, Hansard, 28 June 1961, Vol.643. 546.

<sup>108</sup> New Statesman 21 May 1960.

<sup>109</sup> Biggs-Davison, Hansard, 28 June 1961, Vol.643. 573.

<sup>110</sup> Bryant, ‘The British Nations’ IISS Files EC/3 3811

<sup>111</sup> Kerr, Hansard, 11 February 1963, Vol.671. 1003.

<sup>112</sup> E. Shinwell, Hansard, 28 June 1961, Vol.643. 565.

Continental’ in contrast to Britain, which was insular and ‘profoundly different.’<sup>113</sup> It is probably not coincidental that the General’s remarks came in the wake of Britain’s decision to pursue an independent nuclear deterrent with the United States instead of a European nuclear deterrent with France (see Chapter Three). This decision reflected Britain’s inability to fully identify with Europe at the time and, together with de Gaulle’s reaction, was a testament to the centrality of defence to national and European identity.

### CONCLUSION

As the previous chapters illustrated, many of the foundations of British specificity and superiority had been entrenched in British mentality in relation to defence; a defence that in turn seemed to confirm not just Britain’s superiority to Europe, but also its distinct specificity from the European continent. In influencing the development of ‘national mentality’ in opposition to Europe, defence thus had an indirect impact in shaping a British ‘European identity’ that had little relevance to the ideals of a shared European identity. More directly, the ‘superior specificity’ that distinguished Britain from Europe in British mentality was in large measure impacted by the experiences and imagery of defence; Britain stood alone against the conquest and domination that Europe threatened; Britain stood alone in defence in contrast to a Europe that stumbled and capitulated; Britain was the victor, Europe the vanquished.

Nevertheless, the beginnings of a mitigation of this sense of separation were also evident in debates from the period. Defence was increasingly, albeit tentatively, becoming a driving factor toward a greater identification between Britain and Europe. In forging a British identity in opposition to Europe, and in encouraging a closer identification between the two, defence was consequently instrumental.

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<sup>113</sup> ‘De Gaulle Shuts Door on Britain’ The Daily Telegraph 15 January 1963.



# CHAPTER FIVE – FRANCE: IN DEFENCE OF GRANDEUR

## DEFENCE AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF FRENCH MENTALITY

### INTRODUCTION

French national mentality is rooted in grandeur, within which interrelationships between mission, liberty and civilization play a prominent role. The impact of defence on these aspects of French mentality has been significant, particularly in the context of the myth of national vocation, whereby French grandeur has been both reflected in, and reinforced through, an emphasis on French defence of Christianity, liberty and civilization. Defence has consequently served to entrench grandeur as a defining trait of French specificity, but also to instill a belief in the characteristics and traditions of liberty and civilization as inherently *French*.

At the same time, France has suffered from a disunity that is argued to have contributed to past failures in defence. Nonetheless, such failures, most emphatically in 1870 and 1940, have been met with a resolute and obstinate refusal to abandon the imagery of national grandeur, and to a renewed emphasis on grandeur and unity founded in the imagery of defence. This chapter examines how defence has provided both the impetus and context for attempts to reaffirm the unity and identity of France.

### ASPECTS OF FRENCH MENTALITY AND THE IMPACT OF DEFENCE

#### Grandeur

The concept of greatness is so closely associated with French specificity that *French* greatness even has its own terminology: Grandeur. Not only is grandeur one of the most readily identifiable aspects of French mentality; the resonance of grandeur is such that it is difficult to distill any aspect of French mentality from this core trait. Throughout French history, and in various incarnations, grandeur has provided a thread of

continuity in the conceptualization of French identity. In all these incarnations, defence has played an instrumental role.

### *Most Christian King*

#### *Clovis*

One of the earliest associations between France and greatness stems from France's special relationship with God and the Church. From at least the early Middle Ages, this association was cultivated by ecclesiastical scholars, usually writing under the direction of the Crown.<sup>1</sup> Medieval chronicles espoused France as the earliest Christian nation, and its monarch as 'Most Christian King.'<sup>2</sup> This early conceptualization of France, however, had roots in a defensive battle that took place in approximately 496. In that year, or thereabouts, Clovis I (c.466-511), King of the Franks, obtained an unexpected victory against invading Germanic tribes. According to legend, Clovis' wife, a Christian, persuaded Clovis that God had bestowed victory upon him. In return for God's divine intervention, Clovis converted to Christianity, so entwining the Frankish, (later French), monarchy, in a special relationship with God.<sup>3</sup>

In Medieval chronicles, Clovis' victory was interpreted as evidence that God looked on France with special favour, while Clovis' conversion, portrayed as the first among European monarchs, laid the foundations for the religious primacy of the French kingdom. The imagery of Clovis therefore laid foundations for an early conceptualization of the French monarch on the basis of a religious primacy and grandeur born in the context of a defensive battle. This imagery was adopted by successive monarchical dynasties to reaffirm the chosenness, and hence legitimacy, of Frankish and French kings.

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<sup>1</sup>Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London: Harvard University Press, 1992), p.93.

<sup>2</sup> Colette Beaune, *The Birth of an Ideology: Myths and Symbols of Nation in Late-Medieval France* tr. Susan Ross Huston, (Los Angeles: Berkley; Oxford: University of California Press, 1991), p.19.



In the Thirteenth Century, for example, the ‘sacred lilies of France’ were introduced as monarchical symbols, supposedly representing a gift originally given to Clovis for his coat of arms by an angel of the Lord.<sup>4</sup> Likewise, ecclesiastics legitimized the myth that the oil and Holy Ampulla used to anoint all the Kings of France were a gift from Heaven first bestowed upon Clovis for his own coronation in the Fifth Century.<sup>5</sup>

### *Charlemagne*

The concept of French religious grandeur was similarly reaffirmed in a defensive context by the imagery of the legendary Charlemagne. Following his victories in northern Spain against the Muslim armies threatening Christian Europe, (see below), Charlemagne’s coronation as Roman Emperor by the Pope in 800, served to crystallize the perception of Charlemagne and the Franks as first among the Kings and Peoples of Christianity. Successive dynasties encouraged this perception by accentuating (or inventing) a linkage to, and continuity with, Charlemagne.<sup>6</sup>

Defence was therefore an influential backdrop for early conceptualizations of France based on a French religious primacy encapsulated in the person of the monarch. Initially, French grandeur in relation to Christianity served to reinforce monarchical legitimacy,<sup>7</sup> rather than aid the construction of any ‘national’ identity. Over time, however, the dissemination of religious *and* royal imagery facilitated the conceptualization of common points of reference among disparate and illiterate communities in France. The medieval chroniclers presented ‘....the official definition of the collective identity, thus effectively forging it....’; this particular religious devotion

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<sup>3</sup> For an account of the historiography of Clovis see Beaune, pp.70-90. See also David Chuter *Humanity’s Soldier: France and International Security, 1919-2001* (Providence; Oxford: Bergham Books, 1996), p.16.

<sup>4</sup> Beaune, p.203.

<sup>5</sup> Beaune, p.78.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example Fernand Brandel, *The Identity of France: Vol. I History and Environment* (London: Collins, 1988), p.320; Chuter, p.18; Beaune, p.24.

<sup>7</sup> Beaune, p.313.

became an element of French distinctiveness,<sup>8</sup> endowing it with greatness. While such a conception of France may have fallen well short of the mass conception often deemed necessary to the existence of national identity, it was nonetheless often ‘....the only form of national identity that came to mind.’<sup>9</sup>

### *Defending Royal Grandeur*

The notion of French grandeur appeared again to be confirmed by the outcome of defensive battles in the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries. Particularly significant was the defeat of English and Imperial forces by Philip Augustus (1180-1223) at the Battle of Bouvines in 1214. Augustus’ victory over excommunicated enemies seemed to confirm France’s religious greatness, even her ‘ecclesiastical divine legitimacy.’<sup>10</sup>

Similarly, the Hundred Year’s War with England (1337-1453), and the English occupation, provided a defensive context against which French religious chosenness could be confirmed. Colette Beaune, for example, argues that the symbolic impact of the liberation of Orléans in 1429, was greater than its military significance, because it appeared to confirm the legitimacy of the Dauphin.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, the eventual expulsion of the English, with the ‘providential’ aid of Joan of Arc, was portrayed to the monarch’s subjects as a miracle brought about by ‘divine intervention.’<sup>12</sup> Indeed, defence provided a context in which to reinforce the myth of chosenness and consequently grandeur. St. Michel, for instance, was progressively instituted as protector of France as he manifested himself at times of danger to the kingdom, even ‘appearing’ to Joan of Arc. St. Michel

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<sup>8</sup> Greenfeld, p.93.

<sup>9</sup> Beaune, p.19

<sup>10</sup> Josep R. Llobera, The God of Modernity : The Development of Nationalism in Western Europe (Oxford ; Providence: Berg, 1994), p.46.

<sup>11</sup> Beaune, p.180. See also Seton-Watson Nations & States: An Inquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism (London: Methuen, 1982), p.45.

<sup>12</sup> Beaune, p.126.



‘guaranteed’ victory to kings fighting just wars under his cross, and became a symbol of God’s support for France. At the same time, St. Michel, in the context of defence, emerged as a tangible symbol helping to render the specificity of the nation more evident.<sup>13</sup>

In the Middle Ages, the conceptualization, confirmation and reaffirmation of French specificity were thus influenced by the outcomes of defensive battles and by the imagery they spawned. Defence not only enabled the preservation of the early kingdom of France, it also facilitated the conceptualization of French specificity based on grandeur. Moreover, the battles themselves gradually encouraged the dissemination of ‘national’ symbolism that both reflected and reinforced French distinctiveness from other peoples.<sup>14</sup>

### *Defending National Grandeur*

This sense of distinctiveness was transferred to the secular plane by the French Revolution of 1789, which definitively transplanted the ideological basis of sovereignty – and with it grandeur – from the Crown to the People.<sup>15</sup> In the context of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, grandeur was increasingly associated with the secular notion of the defence of freedom (see ‘Mission’ and ‘Freedom’ below). Even into the early Twentieth Century, however, intellectual writings reaffirmed the greatness of France in the context of ‘national salvation’ myths that retained connotations of providential preservation. Joan of Arc, for example, was portrayed as personifying both the ‘temporal’ and ‘eternal’ salvation of France, her mission being presented above all as

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<sup>13</sup> Beaune, pp.166-171

<sup>14</sup>For the development of national symbolism and consciousness in England and France during the Hundred Years’ War see Beaune, p. 74 & p.165; Seton-Watson *Nations*, p.45 and Lucien Romier, *A History of France* tr. and completed by A. L. Rowse (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1953), p.193.

<sup>15</sup> Chuter, p.20.

the continuing defence of France against foreigners – be they the English enemies of the Hundred Years' War or the German enemies of the First World War.<sup>16</sup>

### *Grandeur in Defeat*

Of course, defeat and occupation, as well as successful defence, punctuated French history.<sup>17</sup> Yet failure in defence did not irreparably undermine French grandeur. Instead, defeat provided both the motivation<sup>18</sup> and the context for the re-affirmation of French grandeur, the disintegration of which the imagery of defence could arrest. Left to fester, failure in defence could corrode the myth of grandeur; paradoxically, defence itself could avert the disintegration of the myth. Two historical examples are striking in this regard; the French defeat by Prussia in 1870<sup>19</sup>, and France's collapse in 1940.

#### *1870*

Robert Gildea writes that the defeat suffered by France in 1870 at the hands of Prussia was more injuring to the French nation than the collapse of France in 1940, but that France's response was to staunchly flourish national symbols of military glory and exalt French military grandeur. The French defeat was attributed to greater opposing numbers, and France's grandeur 'salvaged' by tales of individual acts of heroism and courage by members of the French Armed Forces in defence of their country.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, after 1870, a new educational system was designed as part of the recovery of

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<sup>16</sup> Robert Gildea, *The Past in French History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), pp.16-161.

<sup>17</sup> For example, the invasion of Gaul by the Celts in the Fifth Century BC; Roman conquests of 57-51 BC; Germanic invasions of the Fifth Century; the English invasion of France in 1337; the German invasions of 1870-71; German invasion of 1914; German invasion of 1940.

<sup>18</sup> Robert Gildea takes this argument a step further. For Gildea, '....the main impulse to develop a myth of national greatness ...[may have] been precisely the fact that the collective memory of defeat and humiliation has been too painful to bear.' See Gildea, p.112.

<sup>19</sup> While the Franco-Prussian War was initiated by France, it should be remembered that the defeat of 1870 occurred on French soil, and culminated with the capture of Napoleon III; the battle was essentially a *defensive* one, rendering defeat all the more significant.

<sup>20</sup> Gildea, p.119.



French ‘national consciousness and patriotism’ in which the obligations of French citizens, ‘including military service’, were emphasized.’<sup>21</sup>

French intellectuals like Ernest Lavisse, Albert Sorel, Arthur Chuquet, Gabriel Hanotaux and Charles Maurras, all portrayed a continuous, unbroken and linear history of French greatness, perpetuating the idea that that any defeats suffered by France were the result of the particular failings of given regimes, but never of France itself.<sup>22</sup> School texts were produced illustrating France’s ‘linear’ history, listing French heroes who had ‘....*unified the nation and expelled invaders* [emphasis added].’<sup>23</sup> The grandeur threatened by failure in defence was obstinately reaffirmed by recourse to the imagery of defence itself.

### 1940

After France’s collapse in 1940, General de Gaulle similarly sought to regenerate French grandeur through defence.<sup>24</sup> Just one example of de Gaulle’s symbolism in the context of past defence is the association he fostered with Charlemagne to remind France of her true historic grandeur.<sup>25</sup> The argument has also been postulated that de Gaulle’s determination to develop an independent nuclear force sprang partly from the desire to accentuate the impression of a ‘victorious’ France in contrast to the defeated states France might otherwise have been compared to.<sup>26</sup> One could argue that the deterrent, as much a symbol of defence as a concrete element, served the purpose of maintaining the illusion of victory, papering over France’s collapse. In any case, creating and preserving the

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<sup>21</sup> Llobera, p.200.

<sup>22</sup> See Gildea, pp.112-113 and pp.122-123.

<sup>23</sup> Chuter, p.24.

<sup>24</sup> Philip G. Cerny, *The Politics of Grandeur* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p.25.

<sup>25</sup> ‘Charlemagne to de Gaulle’ *Christian Science Monitor* 17 September 1958. For more examples of de Gaulle’s regeneration of grandeur through defence, see Chapter Seven.

<sup>26</sup> Cyril Buffet and Beatrice Heuser. ‘Marianne and Michel- The Franco-German Couple’ in Cyril Buffet and Beatrice Heuser (eds.), *Haunted by History: Myths in International Relations* (Providence : Berghahn Books, 1998), p.195.



illusion of a country that secured its own defence was important to the maintenance of French grandeur, and consequently to the reaffirmation of French identity.

Yet the very perception of a need to regenerate grandeur stemmed from an awareness of France's past failures in defence – most prominently '...the collective memory of invasion and Occupation made it imperative that France reclaim its status as a great power, and also provided her with the incentive to do so.'<sup>27</sup> As de Gaulle declared: 'France has been invaded on seven different occasions, Paris has been occupied four times by the enemy. No other state in the universe has been subjected to as much.'<sup>28</sup>

The examples of 1870 and 1940 underscore not just the relationship between *war* and national identity, but between *defence* and the sustenance of a viable national identity in France. 1870 and 1940 and their aftermath illustrate a perceived need, or at least desire, to rationalize failure in defence, or even ignore it altogether. At a conscious or subconscious level, it was understood that failure in defence, if attributed to the *nation* would be injurious to France, and to a French identity founded in grandeur. A belief in French grandeur was an essential component of French identity, and when the reality of defeat threatened to undermine this grandeur, the illusion of a seamless national grandeur had to be maintained. Military defeats had to be explained away as aberrations, and their impact on the national myth of grandeur minimized through the obstinate reaffirmation of military glories and virtues.

Rationalizing or ignoring failures in defence thus perpetuated the idea of an underlying, perennial national greatness, disturbed only by the failings of particular regimes. Regimes and individuals suffered defeats for their failings; the grandeur and identity of France remained intact.

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<sup>27</sup> Gildea, p.130.

<sup>28</sup> Charles de Gaulle, radio broadcast 10 December 1945, *Discours et Messages Vol. I* (Paris: Plon, 1970), p..656.



## Mission

Closely linked to the idea of grandeur in French mentality was the notion of a specific French mission; a mission that assumed religious and secular forms as did the grandeur it sought to enhance. Defence was an important aspect of the rhetoric of national mission, both in the Middle Ages (defence of the Church) and in the late Eighteenth Century (defence of liberty). Both missions nonetheless were essentially portrayed as spiritual in nature, reflecting the higher calling - or vocation - of religious *and* secular France. That France had such a vocation could only amplify her grandeur. Thus, while a sense of mission became an element of French national mentality in its own right, it also accentuated the grandeur that encapsulated French specificity.

### *Crusading King*

The origins of France's religious mission derived from her special relationship with the Church, whereby God defended France, and France defended the Church. King Clovis and Charlemagne were again influential symbols in the conceptualization of this defensive mission.

The exploits of Clovis, for example, was portrayed in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries as campaigns undertaken 'to realize God's plan for France' in the course of which God performed miracles on Clovis' behalf.<sup>29</sup> In French chronicles, Clovis was presented as the 'champion' of the Church, who, with God's help, defended Gaul from King Alaric, the 'Spanish Saracen.'<sup>30</sup> Similarly, the Capetian kings that ruled France from 987-1328, tied their dynasty to the concept of a 'sacred mission' based on their descent from Frankish kings and Emperors, laying claim to the function of defence of the Catholic Church.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Beaune, p.74.

<sup>30</sup> Beaune, pp.74-75.

<sup>31</sup> Greenfeld, p.93.



Interestingly, as the concept of France's sacred mission developed, the defensive imagery of Clovis was enhanced. In the early Twelfth Century, for instance, Clovis' invasion of Aquitaine had been chronicled as simply an attempt to enlarge his kingdom, whereas during the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries, the record of Clovis' military activities was 'ennobled' so that Clovis was instead portrayed as having set aside any personal ambitions in order to realize God's providential plan for France.<sup>32</sup> What is significant here, is that for this 'ennobling' to take place, the notion that his were wars of *aggression* had to be minimized, if not entirely disguised. From early on then, French grandeur was tied, at least ideologically, to a mission that was essentially *defensive*.

Charles Martel, grandfather of Charlemagne, was also significant in the development of the myth of French defensive mission.<sup>33</sup> In approximately 732, Martel successfully led a Frankish defence at the Battle of Poitiers against Muslims seeking to advance into Gaul from Spain. The Muslims had already established a presence from Persia to northern Africa that threatened Western Christendom. In French (and western) historiography, Martel's success at the Battle of Poitiers consequently came to represent not only a providential defence of 'chosen' and 'rightful' France, but also the defence of Christianity and the preservation of western civilization.<sup>34</sup>

Similarly, it was in the context of the defence of Christianity that Charlemagne gained much of his legendary stature, and through which France was increasingly linked to a defensive mission. In 778, Charlemagne, with his legendary paladin Roland, engaged Muslim Saracens in northern Spain, seeking to prevent the advance of Islam

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<sup>32</sup> Beaune, pp.74.-75.

<sup>33</sup> Charles Martel was never King of the Franks, but he led the military campaigns that re-conquered most of Gaul for the Franks, and at his death divided his lands between his two sons in the manner of a king. For more on Charles Martel see Paul Fouracre, *Age of Charles Martel* (Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd., 2000) and Maurice Mercier, *Charles Martel et la bataille de Poitiers* (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1944).

<sup>34</sup> Suzanne Citron *L'Histoire De France Autrement* (Paris: Les Éditions Ouvrières, 1992), pp.44-45.



north of the Pyrenees.<sup>35</sup> In approximately 1100, 300 or so years after the death of Charlemagne, the exploits of Charlemagne and Roland were recorded in the *Chanson de Roland*, a medieval epic poem depicting the valiant but doomed defence of Count Roland against a numerically superior Saracen army. The *Chanson* entrenched an association between France and the defence of Christianity, and is believed to have constituted foundational material for later references to France as ‘God’s soldier.’<sup>36</sup> It was in relation to this defensive mission that Charlemagne’s successors (or those who claimed succession from him) subsequently sought to define themselves. As monarchs entwined their person with Charlemagne and the defence of Christianity, this mission become an increasingly prominent aspect of the specificity and greatness of France.<sup>37</sup>

Defence of Christianity also enabled France’s grandeur to be explicitly confirmed by the Church itself, gradually tipping the scales in favour of *nation* rather than Church. At the end of the Middle Ages, for instance, the Pope was forced to ask protection from France against marauding barbarians, in exchange for which Rome was obliged to acknowledge France’s ‘exceptional position’ within Christendom.<sup>38</sup> Medieval chronicles portrayed Popes turning to France when in need of assistance, and granted France a singular status in relation to Christianity and civilization.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, defence of Christianity facilitated the dissemination of the sense of *France’s* mission to the *French*. On Crusade in 1099, for example, Pope Urban II called on the French as ‘chosen by

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<sup>35</sup> While Charlemagne in essence *invaded* Spain his actions are endowed with a defensive aura because of the perceived threat to Christianity from Islam. For an overview of the perceived threat from Islam in the Eighth Century see Delanty *Inventing Europe*, p.24.

<sup>36</sup> Chuter, p.17. The *Chanson de Roland* glorified ‘sweet France’; the Arabs of the Holy Land, however, applied the term *Franci* to all Westerners (see Greenfeld, p.93). The *Chanson* consequently favours an ambiguous synonymy between France and western civilization that is conducive to the notion of a French mission in defence of Christianity and civilization, not just French territory.

<sup>37</sup> See, for instance, Chuter, p.17

<sup>38</sup> Greenfeld, p.94.

<sup>39</sup> Marie-Madeleine Martin, *Histoire de L’Unité Française: La Formation Morale de la France* (Paris: Editions du Conquistador, 1949), pp.126-127.



God', recalled to them the exploits of their 'ancestor Charlemagne' and 'entrusted' them with the '....mission of leading Christianity against the Infidel.'<sup>40</sup>

The early religious notion of French mission was consequently multi-faceted. Firstly, the mission enhanced the grandeur of the King and to some extent that of the embryonic 'nation.' Secondly, monarchical and 'national' grandeur were augmented in a universal context of civilization and Christianity, the defence of which encouraged a belief in the destined primacy and leadership of France. The universalism to which Charlemagne's descendants laid claim therefore represented not only the perception of an altruistic French mission in defence of Western Christian civilization but also a belief in a certain French predominance, if not dominance, within that civilization.

### *Crusading Nation*

This sense of primacy and mission was retained, even enhanced, in secularized Revolutionary France. In effect, French Revolutionaries redefined France's mission in secular terms, albeit with religious zeal:

Like he of old, [the most Christian king] of the Church, the defender of Christianity, who spread its message with fire and sword, she [France] carried and spread the gospel of Nationality – liberty and equality – with fire and sword. The crusading nation succeeded the crusading king.<sup>41</sup>

Only France, it was argued, had the right to project herself as a model, and in pursuit of her humanist and altruistic mission, France would '....remake the world in her own image.'<sup>42</sup>

Once again, defence had a multi-faceted relevance to the conceptualization of French identity. Firstly, the mission of defending the Revolution and its principles was

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* See also Chuter, pp.16-17. It should be noted that Colette Beaune asserts that French primacy in God's eyes was not claimed until around 1300, although she too associates this sense of primacy with the mission of defence of Christians and the Church. See Beaune, p.180.

<sup>41</sup> Greenfeld, p.188.

<sup>42</sup> Gildea, p.138.



almost a defining characteristic of the new France from its very inception. Indeed, in the aftermath of the Revolution,

....militant patriotism ...[was made into] the essence of political creation, for the two were not separated by time and space but run together. The Jacobin and Girondin majority of the National Assembly proclaimed the republic in September 1792 and found *la patrie en danger*.... [emphasis added].<sup>43</sup>

Secondly, the mission of the Revolution found expression in wars of liberation that were explicitly defined as *defensive* in nature.<sup>44</sup> Through the rhetoric of the Revolutionaries, France became increasingly associated with the defence and advancement of human liberty – a humanitarian mission of exporting freedom to the ‘oppressed’ (see ‘Freedom’, below).<sup>45</sup> It is interesting to note that in 1792, French Revolutionaries, Georges-Jacques Danton and Abbé Grégoire, wrote that France had *defensive barriers* given her to her by nature that made it unnecessary for France to seek aggressive enlargement; France’s exploits abroad could thus be easily justified as consistent with her ‘principles.’<sup>46</sup> Indeed, while the Revolutionaries sought to match or exceed the military grandeur of France’s kings, the constitution of 1791 specifically renounced wars of conquest.<sup>47</sup> This essentially *defensive* aspect of the French vocation remained entrenched in conceptualizations of the French military. As late as 1939, for instance, the Radical Socialist, Édouard Daladier, declared of the French military: ““Their heroism is that of defence, not that of conquest.””<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> David Gress, From Plato to Nato: The Idea of the West and its Opponents (New York: The Free Press, 1998), p.304.

<sup>44</sup> The 1791 Constitution explicitly stated that the French nation renounced wars of conquest. See Gildea, p.113.

<sup>45</sup> Jacques Szaluta, ‘Marshal Pétain and French Nationalism in the Interwar Years and Vichy’ *History of European Ideas* 15 (1-3) (1992), p.115.

<sup>46</sup> Braudel, p.322.

<sup>47</sup> Gildea, p.113.

<sup>48</sup> Gildea, pp. 147-148.

### *Crime and Punishment*

Intriguingly, failures in defence were frequently attributed to deviation from France's vocation. Defeat by Prussia in 1870, for example, was explained as punishment for straying from religion to liberalism, but more significantly, for the abandonment of Rome by French troops sent in 1849 to protect Holy See against revolution.<sup>49</sup> Likewise, in 1940, Catholics portrayed the collapse of France as the result of an attempt to build the country without God, and the consequences of that collapse as an opportunity for renewal according to France's original mission.<sup>50</sup> Two significant points must be made. The first is that while the notion of vocation was a constant in French mentality, it was also vocation whose 'true north' was a matter of contention. The second is that defence had the potential to either confirm, or call into question, the very course and mission the country was embarked on.

### **Freedom**

#### *In Defence of Liberty*

Closely connected to the idea of mission was the idea of liberty. Particularly in the wake of the French Revolution, the ideal of liberty became entwined with the notion of the French defensive mission, according to which France had to follow her particular vocation to liberate every nation.<sup>51</sup> This defensive mission is alluded to, but not elaborated on, elsewhere as the 'myth of Year II' – the myth of the nation in arms defending the Revolution and France as one, both from enemies within, and from the onslaught of reactionaries from abroad, and symbolized by the defeat of invading

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<sup>49</sup> Louis Veuillot, editor of *Catholic Univers*, cited in Gildea, p.227.

<sup>50</sup> Gildea, p.229.

<sup>51</sup> See, for example, Tzvetan Todorov, on Jules Michelet in Tzvetan Todorov, *Nous et Les Autres: La Réflexion Française sur la Diversité Humaine* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1989), pp.235-246, especially p.238 for references to France as a 'vessel of humanity', with a destiny and vocation of liberty. See also Chuter, p.21



Prussians at the battle of Valmy in 1792.<sup>52</sup> As Robert Gildea writes: ‘The myth of the soldiers of Year II was extended from the notion of a defensive war to that of the universal mission of France to confer freedom on subject peoples.’<sup>53</sup>

The association between France and the defence of national and international liberty extended beyond the Revolutionary wars. In 1870, for example, the Third Republic appealed to the nation in arms that had defended French liberty in 1792. In 1914, the myth of a defensive war helped to engage the Left in support of the First World War, which was projected as a defensive crusade on behalf of oppressed peoples of Europe. The French Resistance revisited the myth of the ‘nation-in-arms’ in defence of liberty during the Second World War.<sup>54</sup>

However, while liberty and wars of liberation were an important element of France’s national vocation, liberty was also influential in the conceptualization of French identity in its own right. Again, defence was an important backdrop. Long before the French Revolution, for example, the English occupation of France during the Hundred Years’ War was portrayed as a period of servitude and slavery, with the subsequent regaining of freedom a ‘miracle’ in which, of course, Joan of Arc played such a profoundly important psychological part.<sup>55</sup>

Far later, but still before the French Revolution, the American War of Independence (1775-1783) helped to crystallize the association between liberty and France, particularly as England, the other pretender to ‘freedom’ as a national value, opposed the efforts of its American colonies to seek independence. The war provided an opportunity for the dissociation of liberty as an English characteristic, an opportunity

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<sup>52</sup> Gildea, p.138.

<sup>53</sup> Gildea, p.145.

<sup>54</sup> Gildea, pp.139, 143-144 & 147-148.

<sup>55</sup> Beaune, p.134.

realized in the context of French support in ‘defence’ of the freedom of the American colonies, enabling France to project herself as the true nation of liberty in Europe.<sup>56</sup>

### *Defence, Freedom and National Membership*

In the lead up to the French Revolution, defence of liberty, both past and present, was also invoked in the conflict between the nobility and the ‘people.’ The nobility claimed liberty as their rightful preserve, on the grounds that they were descendents of the Franks, who had originally conquered Gaul, and who thus constituted the true French nation. The ‘people’, on the other hand, were descendants of the conquered Gauls, and consequently had no inherent right to liberty, *nor, implicitly, were they part of the French nation.*<sup>57</sup> Significantly, the outcome of failed defence in the past was utilized to define the ‘true nation’ in the present.

Nor was the context of defence referred to by the nobility alone; advocates of the ‘people’ also framed their arguments in relation to the Frankish conquest. With the onset of the French Revolution, for example, the French Revolutionary leader Abbé Sieyès called for the ‘people’ or the Third Estate to take their place as the rightful French nation,<sup>58</sup> in essence mobilizing the ‘true’ French nation to rise up against the ‘foreign’ nobility and reclaim the liberty originally taken from them by the conquering Franks.<sup>59</sup> Similarly, appeals were made to the heroic resistance of Gallic ancestors; in the 1840s, for instance, the social theorist Georges-Jacques Proudhon wrote of ‘our Celtic heroes’ like Vercingétorix, who led a Gallic revolt against Roman rule in 52 B.C. and Velleda, whose tribe fought against Roman conquests in the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D.<sup>60</sup> An alternative argument

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<sup>56</sup> Greenfeld, pp.181-182.

<sup>57</sup> Claude-Gilbert Dubois ‘Fonction des Myths d’Origine dans le Developpement des Idees Nationalistes en France’ *History of European Ideas* 16 (4-6) (1993), pp.415-422.

<sup>58</sup> Llobera, p.183.

<sup>59</sup> Eugen Weber, *My France: Politics, Culture, Myth* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1991), p.22.

<sup>60</sup> Weber, *My France*, p.28.



was postulated that the Gauls had never been wholly conquered by the Franks, and that the original Gaul population consequently remained the same, ‘....with their political and civil rights intact....’<sup>61</sup>

What is significant is that reclaiming liberty and membership of the nation seemed at least partly dependent on the ability to reverse the imagery of conquest – the imagery of failed defence. At the very least, the shadow of past conquest was significant enough to be included in the rhetoric of nobility and Third Estate alike.

In summary, France’s history of invasions endowed the *ideal* or *ideological* French liberty in Europe and beyond with a very corporeal dimension. Liberty was not just a theoretical value to be ‘defended’, but also a tangible concept, the significance of which to French mentality was solidified by French experiences, and fears, of occupation. Furthermore, the defence of liberty was a significant aspect of the imagery used to try to both define the nation *and* overcome internal divisions. The defence of liberty remained a central aspect of the construction of a national mentality in which France was the defender of liberty not just in Europe, but also throughout the world.

### Civilization

Liberty and the defence of liberty also influenced the development of civilization as a French value and attribute. The influence of defence in this context was less direct, but present nonetheless. Firstly, the Medieval synthesis between Christianity and civilization provided early foundations for an association between France’s vocation to defend the Church, and her ‘mission’ to bring civilization to the world.

Secondly, in the aftermath of 1789, the quest for French unity, spurred in part by contemporary threats to the nation, and in part by the fissures the Revolution had created,

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<sup>61</sup> See Llobera, p.183.

fueled the myth of a ‘unifying’ civilization in which distinctions between conquerors and conquered in France could be blurred. Thirdly, in the wake of the Revolution, liberty – and liberal democracy – constituted an even more resonant element of western civilization with which France was closely associated. The French attachment to liberty after 1789, reinforced by the ‘defensive’ missions of the Revolutionary wars, consequently strengthened the relationship between France and civilization.

### *The Medieval Synthesis*

Norman Davies writes that civilization in the Middle Ages was theocratic, in other words, ‘....governed by the all-pervasive concept of the Christian God....The service of God was seen as the sole legitimate purpose of all human enterprise. The contemplation of God was the highest form of intellectual or creative endeavor.’<sup>62</sup> France’s belief in her primacy within the Church and in her mission to defend Christianity were thus not far removed from the notion of primacy in civilization as it was conceived in the Middle Ages.

Moreover, according to one interpretation, the Medieval ‘synthesis’ of Christianity and the elements of classical civilization were symbolized by the coronation of Charlemagne as Roman Emperor in 800 A.D.<sup>63</sup> It is perhaps unsurprising then, that as France sought to accentuate its position as a center of learning and culture, Charlemagne himself was portrayed as one of the founders of the transfer of learning from Athens, to Rome and to Paris, thus associating him with the founding of the first French centers of learning, including the University of Paris.<sup>64</sup> The historical figure most associated with French defence of Christianity therefore also represented preservation of the ‘Western’

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<sup>62</sup> Norman Davies, *Europe: A History* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p.431.

<sup>63</sup> Gress, p.209. For an example of such a commentary on Charlemagne, see Angilbert, ‘Carmen de Karolo Magno’ in Francesca Pozzoli (ed.), *Europa La Pi ù Nobile, La Pi ù Bella: Idee e Ideali dell’ Europa dale Origini ai Nostri Giorni*, (Milan: Saggi Tascabili, 1999), p.29.

<sup>64</sup> Beaune, p.267.



classical civilization enshrined in the Christian faith. In French historiography, Charlemagne, along with philosophers and artists, is consequently a symbol of European civilization.<sup>65</sup>

*The Unity of Civilization – Conquerors and Conquered in Revolutionary France*

Civilization, however, had domestic, as well as international, implications for French national identity. The entrenchment of civilization as a French characteristic was designed in part to overcome the divisive imagery of the French Revolution. The ideological debate between the descendants of the ‘Franks’ and ‘Gauls’ over the right to liberty had polarized the country into a form of ‘race war’ in which the imagery of defence and past invasions was significant.

In Frankish historiography, the right to ‘liberty’ and ‘nationality’ had been determined by the Gauls’ failure to defend themselves against the Franks; civilization was now instilled as a *national* characteristic in order to heal the divisions between conquerors and conquered (see ‘Freedom’ above). This continuity united French citizens in a line of civilization that stretched from the Romans (who had originally ‘civilized’ Gaul) to the Franks (who had rejuvenated the civilization of the Gallo-Romans) and back to the Gauls themselves (the true ancestors of the French, who had assimilated and Christianized the Franks).<sup>66</sup> The French historian Jules Michelet, for example, emphasized the ‘integration’ of France’s inhabitants over time, and the superiority of nations, like France, that were capable of ‘assimilating’ strangers.<sup>67</sup>

As the author Louis Dimier declared: “Thus no revolution at the origins of our history. *No conquerors and no conquered*. A quick fusion of the races...Peace among

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<sup>65</sup> Todorov, p.158.

<sup>66</sup> Weber, *My France*, pp. 30-31 & pp.37-38.

<sup>67</sup> Todorov, p.243. See also Jules Michelet *Introduction a l’Histoire Universelle* (Paris: Calmann Lévy Éditeur, 1879), pp.70-73.

our dead [emphasis added].’’<sup>68</sup> The need to heal divisions that were sharpened in the imagery of conquest thus prompted an emphasis on civilization as a French *national* characteristic.

### *The Synthesis after 1789*

Despite the secular emphasis of the French Revolution, a connection between Christianity, western civilization and liberal democracy persisted. The French historian Alexander de Tocqueville, for example, believed that Christianity and liberal democracy were entwined, that civil liberty was in essence a form of secularized Christianity.<sup>69</sup>

France’s grandiose ‘synthesized’ mission in defence of Christianity, liberty and civilization thus continued to impact upon the conceptualization of France as a ‘role model’ destined to export its values and culture.<sup>70</sup> The conceptualization of France as defender of Christianity *and* liberty thus found perhaps its fullest expression in French defence of civilization. For Michelet, France was the ‘incarnation’ of God on earth; she had assumed and furthered the work of the Roman Empire and of Christianity, and the Revolution itself was a second coming.<sup>71</sup> By the Eighteenth Century, French intellectuals like Voltaire were producing works exalting French culture, and the superiority of a French civilization destined to ‘flood’ all of Europe.<sup>72</sup>

As with the religious incarnation of French mission, the secularized national mission in defence of liberty held distinctly European, as well as universal, connotations that reinforced the conceptualization of French primacy and dominance, albeit in a humanistic and altruistic semblance.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Louis Dimier, cited in Weber, *My France*, p.38.

<sup>69</sup> Gress, p.324.

<sup>70</sup> See Chuter, p.22; Gildea, p.113.

<sup>71</sup> Citron, *Mythe National*, p.19.

<sup>72</sup> Dubois, ‘Fonction’, p.419.

<sup>73</sup> See, for example, Todorov’s comments on the tensions between humanism and national patriotism in the writings of Jules Michelet in Todorov, pp.235-246.



## Independence

French grandeur, reinforced through France's defensive mission and her association with liberty and civilization, consequently had distinctly internationalist connotations. Yet while French grandeur was closely linked to an international mission, French specificity also demanded national differentiation and independence. Demands for independence combined with entrenched myths of universalistic mission contributed to a French identity that was essentially one of superiority and leadership on the global scale in general and within Europe in particular; that which bound France to Europe - defence of the Church, Liberty and Civilization - also made her feel superior within it.

Indeed, from at least the coronation of Charlemagne, who was dubbed even by his contemporaries as 'father of Europe,'<sup>74</sup> the stage was set for tension between French identity *within* Europe and the belief that French grandeur justified a dominant role for French identity in Europe and beyond. The tension between international grandeur and independent grandeur was evident in the context of France's mission in defence of Christendom, which enhanced her status as 'first daughter of the Church' and laid the foundations for a symbolism of unity in Europe with France at its heart.

Yet as France's grandeur increased, so did her drive to assert the independence that her status demanded. Originally, the tension between primacy in the Church and the quest for independence was reflected at the monarchical, rather than national, level. Some scholars, for instance, suggest that Charlemagne may have been irritated by his coronation as Emperor by the Pope – an act that symbolized the subordination of Charlemagne's power to God and to the Church, asserting spiritual authority over the temporal plain.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Gress p.209. For an example of such a commentary on Charlemagne, see Angilbert 'Carmen de Karolo Magno' in Pozzoli (ed.), p.29.

<sup>75</sup> Gress, p.210.

The desire for an independence befitting grandeur was intensified during the later Middle Ages; after all, if the French monarchs had such a close relationship with God, why should they depend on Rome at all?<sup>76</sup> Defence proved valuable in confirming France's right to independent grandeur. For instance, French victory at Bouvines (1214) against not just the excommunicated enemy but also the forces of Holy Roman Emperor Otto IV, became a symbol of France's right to independence.<sup>77</sup> Struggles against the influence of the Pope in the French kingdom continued during the Fifteenth Century<sup>78</sup> and by the Seventeenth Century, France's special responsibilities in defence of Christendom were being exploited to enhance the independence of the monarch and the national church. It was argued, for instance, that the responsibilities for defence for the Church were best understood by the King rather than the Pope, and as such the loyalty of France's secular and theocratic nobility should lie above all with the King.<sup>79</sup>

The imagery of French independence was perhaps best encapsulated by the coronation of Napoleon, who explicitly reversed the symbolism of Charlemagne's coronation by taking the crown from the Pope and placing it on his own head. This symbolism was even more significant because, with his victory over Prussia in 1806, Napoleon essentially dissolved the final remnants of the Holy Roman Empire to remake it in his own image.<sup>80</sup> Moreover, while the imagery of Charlemagne represented a western civilization founded in the cultural and spiritual unity of Europe,<sup>81</sup> his symbolism as Holy Roman Emperor could also serve to reaffirm the independence and superiority of France.

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<sup>76</sup> Greenfeld, p.94.

<sup>77</sup> Buffet & Heuser, p.178; Llobera, p.46.

<sup>78</sup> Beaune, p.122.

<sup>79</sup> Gress, p.285.

<sup>80</sup> Gress, p.308.

<sup>81</sup> Gress, p.211.



Napoleon, for example, sought to consolidate his power with ‘.... claims to universal monarchy legitimated by the cult of Charlemagne.’<sup>82</sup>

It is thus not surprising that as late as 1966, Pierre Gallois, the French nuclear strategist, asserted that Germans, Belgians, Italians and Dutch were closer to the idea of European integration than the French because they had for centuries belonged to the Holy Roman Empire, whereas ‘.... French national consciousness has consolidated itself in the struggle against the Holy Roman Empire.’<sup>83</sup>

Thus, while the myths of grandeur and mission that contributed to French specificity had a distinctly universalistic dimension, this universalism was *dominant* rather than *integrationist* in nature. Moreover, defence and its associated imagery, which was influential in shaping a French identity based on grandeur and mission, also supported the conceptualization of Europe as a greater France.

### **National Defence as National Unity**

Thus far, it has been argued that grandeur, amplified by the projection of a national vocation and a powerful association with liberty and civilization, was a prominent feature in the conceptualization of France. This conceptualization, as discussed above, was disseminated, confirmed and reaffirmed in the context of defence. Yet the conceptualization of France based on grandeur, vocation, liberty and civilization, was not uniform, nor did it ensure the unity of the nation. In this respect too, the impact of defence on national mentality is both revealing and influential.

### ***The Consequences of Disunity***

Firstly, in the context of defence, France has often made deliberate recourse to the consequences of failed unity in the past to bolster unity in the present. During the

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<sup>82</sup> Gildea, p.113

<sup>83</sup> See Pierre Gallois in Buffet & Heuser (eds.), p.180.

Hundred Years' War, for example, the myth was promoted that legendary Troy (from whom the French at times claimed to have descended) had collapsed because of internal disunity, not because of the superiority of its enemy; foreigners alone, in other words, could not destroy France. The myth was particularly relevant because of the Anglo-Burgundian occupation of Paris (1418-1436), in the context of which internal divisions were blamed for English successes.<sup>84</sup>

Similarly, Napoleon extolled the strength of unified France, alluding to the dangers of internal division and the rallying influence of external threats, when he declared in 1803: “United, the French Nation has never been conquered...there is no miracle that cannot be accomplished by the genius of the French when the National Independence is threatened.”<sup>85</sup> To bolster his calls for national unity, Napoleon fostered the tradition of Charlemagne, the ‘unifier’ of peoples in the Holy Roman Empire.<sup>86</sup>

Likewise, in the 1940s the Vichy regime drew parallels with the Hundred Years' War to generate unity, comparing de Gaulle's actions to those of the Burgundians who had occupied Paris, and referring to D-Day as an English assault on France.<sup>87</sup>

### *Defensive Imagery and Unity*

Secondly, imagery born in defence was utilized to generate and disseminate patriotic sentiment in defence of the nation. For instance, following French victories in Orléans, Normandy and Montagis in the mid-fifteenth century, festivals were instituted to ‘celebrate unity.’<sup>88</sup> Such celebrations were often twinned with existing religious festivals, facilitating the dissemination of ‘national’ symbolism along well-established channels,

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<sup>84</sup> Beaune, p.228; Chuter, p.22

<sup>85</sup> Cited in Chuter, p.13.

<sup>86</sup> See Weber, *My France*, pp.30-31.

<sup>87</sup> Chuter, p.30.

<sup>88</sup> Beaune, p.150.



and encouraging the development of common points of reference among different communities.<sup>89</sup>

Much of the imagery of unity was explicitly linked to defence. After the French Revolution, for instance, France's school syllabus was re-written to present a list of French heroes who had '.... unified the nation and expelled invaders.'<sup>90</sup> During the Napoleonic wars, Napoleon reintroduced the cult of Joan of Arc, celebrated annually on May 8, as an appeal to unity.<sup>91</sup> Similarly, Marshal Pétain said of Joan of Arc: 'Not only did she *vanquish the foreign enemy and liberate the territory* of the nation, but *she pacified discord which threatened the existence of the country* [emphasis added].'<sup>92</sup>

### ***Defence and Patriotism***

Thirdly, experiences of defence helped to instill a sense of patriotic duty. Colette Beaune, for example, writes that it '....took the invasion of 1415-16 to shock people sufficiently to convince them that it was a duty to die for their country.'<sup>93</sup> Defence therefore provided the impetus for an association between death and sacrifice for country, a sacrifice that enhanced the perceived worth of the nation and consequently contributed to the grandeur of France.

Similarly, Gildea argues that one of the strategies employed in France to bolster national grandeur was precisely to argue that sacrifice, or '....defeat and national mourning rather than victory were conducive to sentiments of national solidarity, and that it was in the crucible of collective suffering that renewed greatness was forged.'<sup>94</sup> Whether attempts to gather the imagery of sacrifice were as consciously instrumentalist as Gildea suggests is difficult to determine. Regardless, however, of whether such imagery

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<sup>89</sup> Beaune, p.146.

<sup>90</sup> Chuter, p.25.

<sup>91</sup> Chuter, p.28.

<sup>92</sup> Letter of Pétain, 15 May 1932, quoted in Gildea, p.161.

<sup>93</sup> Beaune, p.306.

was consciously exploited or resorted to more intuitively, defence remained an influential context.

It was with the French Revolution that the concept of the ‘nation-in-arms’ held the greatest significance. Although from 1798 the needs of the French army were met by conscription, the martial spirit was encouraged in France’s new citizens, particularly through the sponsoring of sport and gymnastics designed to keep the people always at the ready for the struggles for existence that might arise. Through a series of gymnastics associations, for example, the ‘project’ of melding the army and nation was undertaken, while sporting festivals were flooded with national symbols to mobilize the community and forge solidarity in the consciousness that the need to act in defence of the homeland might arise at any time.<sup>95</sup>

Yet a little over 150 years later, French unity was not yet forged, and even a symbol of unity like Joan of Arc remained contested. In the 1940s, for instance, Catholics proclaimed Joan’s mission to save France and restore it to its Catholic vocation, while the Left accused the Church of having betrayed her; similarly, the Vichy regime emphasized Joan’s resistance against the English, while the Resistance exalted her as a heroine of French defence.<sup>96</sup>

As the French Communist Party explicitly declared in 1944: ‘For every thinking patriot the problem...is the maintenance of the unity of France and the restoration of her grandeur.’ For the post-war government of France, unity remained elusive, particularly with the onset of the Algerian war. Recourse to the symbolism of defence continued to be extensive. For example, ceremonies that highlighted the solidarity in, and between,

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<sup>94</sup> Gildea, p.113.

<sup>95</sup> Jean-Michel Faure ‘Forging a French Fighting Spirit: The Nation, Sport, Violence and War’ translated by Peter Snowdon *International Journal of the History of Sport* Vol. 12 (August, 1995), pp.77-79 and pp. 81-82.

<sup>96</sup> Gildea, pp.161-162.



the armed forces and the nation were frequent; in 1957, 3000 parachutists were brought in for Bastille Day celebrations as a symbol of national solidarity in Algeria,<sup>97</sup> while for the 1958 celebrations, Algerian and French troops paraded together, representing the integrity and unity not just of France, but of the French Union.<sup>98</sup>

With the advent of General de Gaulle, the utilization of defence to enhance unity probably reached its highest expression. For de Gaulle,

....the purpose of ...foreign policy was not the attainment of glory and power for France for its own sake. Rather, *grandeur* refers primarily to the need to *create a new and more profound sense of national consciousness, capable of transcending the traditional divisions which have characterised the French polity....*[emphasis added]<sup>99</sup>

As the following chapter illustrates, defence and grandeur, which had helped to shape the conceptualization of France, continued to serve as tools for entrenching and disseminating a shared and unified national identity into the 1950s.

## CONCLUSION

Grandeur and mission, founded in the trinity of Christianity, liberty and civilization, were important constituent elements of the conceptualization of French identity, a conceptualization that was founded and disseminated against the backdrop and imagery of defence. The identity of France became tangible through a religious and later secular sense of grandeur invested firstly in the monarch and eventually the nation. This identity, framed in grandeur, was also constructed through a sense of mission that spanned Christianity, liberty and the synthesis of these values into western civilization. Interestingly, these ideals survived the secularization of the idea of French mission by French Revolutionaries who were essentially anti-clerical.

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<sup>97</sup> The Times 13 July 1957.

<sup>98</sup> 'Algerians go to Paris for Fête Day' The Times 14 July 1958.

<sup>99</sup> Philip G. Cerny The Politics of Grandeur (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p.4.

Moreover, French grandeur and mission and their associated trinity of values also impacted on the conceptualization of Europe in French mentality. While much of the imagery that encapsulated French grandeur and specificity gained resonance in a European context, French grandeur also demanded leadership rather than submission, and independence rather than integration. The myth of France's defensive mission was thus instrumental to the conceptualization of France's dominant role in Europe. In the post-war era, preserving an illusion of successful defence was equally important to retaining the myth of independent grandeur and permitting the continuing differentiation between France and lesser, defeated, European powers.

In terms of the preservation function of identity construction, however, the *physical* defence of France was often found wanting, most recently and starkly with the collapse of France in 1940. The Vichy régime was both proof and source of an enduring national disunity in the face of an external threat, an indication that neither French identity itself, nor the lessons of past disunity, were sufficient to guarantee the preservation of France.

French identity was thus a contested one, as the fervent obsession with, and quest for, national unity discussed above suggests. Intriguingly, however, while Italy's performance in the Second World War, as we shall see, is generally perceived as an indication of weak national identity, France's collapse of 1940 is rarely tarnished with the same analysis. Somehow, despite division in the face of the external German threat, and a collapse which by rights ought to belie the myth of grandeur, the overall fabric of the identity of France remained intact; grandeur, mission, liberty, civilization. How was French identity able to persist so vividly in the image of grandeur, when Italy's identity was so decried in the wake of its experiences of Fascism and the Second World War?



Once again, defence appears to have played a prominent role. Firstly, France was liberated *before* the end of the Second World War, allowing France to appropriate a greater role in its liberation.<sup>100</sup> Italy's liberation, on the other hand, was not completed until the end of the war, a fact that threatened to reduce Italy's ownership of its liberation (see Chapters Eight and Nine). This distinction between the experiences of France and Italy is significant because it suggests a link between the ability to provide for one's own defence, or at least to maintain the illusion of doing so, and the preservation, confirmation and reaffirmation of national greatness and prestige. To ascertain this, one need only read the comments of General de Lattre de Tassigny who, after conferring with de Gaulle, refused an order from Allied commander Eisenhower to fall back from the defence of Strasbourg, describing the town as '....a symbol of the resistance and the greatness of France. The liberation of this town was the definitive sign of the national resurrection of France. To abandon it now would lead France to doubt victory.'<sup>101</sup> In this respect, defence appears once more fundamental to the strength of national identity.

Secondly, after the Second World War France continued to pursue grandeur in the context of defence, whereas Italy sought to pursue greatness through 'peace', or even 'pacifism,' It is not a coincidence that the symbols of glory wheeled out for the benefit of France's grandeur after 1870 were military; similarly, it is not coincidental that de Gaulle sought the regeneration of post-war France through rearmament. France refused to abandon grandeur in the wake of its defeats, and for de Gaulle it was imperative that post-war France not sue for peace, but rather seek to rearm.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> For the liberation and French greatness see Gildea, p.129.

<sup>101</sup> General de Lattre de Tassigny, *Histoire de la première armée française, Rhin et Danube* (Paris: Plon, 1949), pp. 349-350 and p.356.

<sup>102</sup> See Gildea, pp.128-129.

When these two factors are considered it becomes easier to place French preoccupation with independence in defence policy in its proper context of identity, rather than dismiss it as the irrational insistence of a ‘difficult’ nation.

This chapter has argued that defence was highly influential in the construction of French national identity. The following chapter seeks to illustrate the persistent relevance of defence to the question of national identity in France in the mid-to late- 1950s, and the continuing recourse made to the imagery of defence in the enduring search for national unity.



# CHAPTER SIX – FRENCH NATIONAL MENTALITY, 1956-1958: UNITY, DISUNITY AND DEFENCE

## INTRODUCTION

In the mid to late 1950s, conceptions of French specificity, based on notions of greatness and superiority, were still broadly held in France, but their foundations were somewhat shaken. Ideas of grandeur had been tested by French collapse during the Second World War and, more recently, by the Suez crisis of 1956, when France, Britain and Israel had sought – and failed – to join forces against Egypt for control of the Suez Canal.

Moreover, the Vichy regime of the 1940s stood as a stark reminder of past divisions in France, while Breton calls for independence were indicative of contemporary disunity; in 1957, Brittany even sent a petition for independence from France to the United Nations.<sup>1</sup> The same year the *Christian Science Monitor* described France as a country ‘divided by 43,000,000 Frenchmen.’<sup>2</sup>

France, in effect, was in the grip of a number of destabilizing influences. Political divisions and a plurality of parties denied successive governments an effective majority, contributing to governmental instability. Between its inception in 1944 and the establishment of the Fifth Republic in 1958, the French Fourth Republic witnessed twenty-five different Cabinets, each with an average life of just seven months.<sup>3</sup> Six different Prime Ministers held office between January 1956 December 1958 alone.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, anti-imperialist movements in the colonies challenged French influence and

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Breton Group Would Sever Ties to France; Urges U.N. Aid; Paris Is Not Impressed’ New York Times 14 February 1957.

<sup>2</sup> ‘Up, Brittany’ Christian Science Monitor 18 February 1957.

<sup>3</sup> S.E. Finer, Comparative Government: An Introduction to the Study of Politics (Middlesex: Penguin, 1970), p.295.

prestige. Following defeat in Indochina at the Battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954, France had conceded independence to Morocco and Tunisia. The Algerian Crisis, ongoing since 1954, had become a source of increasing tension, dividing French political opinion between the extremes of the Communists, who supported the movement for Algerian independence and the Right, which favoured its repression, calling for a continued French presence to protect the one million or so Europeans in Algeria. This tension finally culminated in the May 1958 revolt of senior officers of the French Army in Algeria, who threatened to invade Paris if General de Gaulle were not returned to power.

In this context, it is perhaps unsurprising that the regeneration of French identity was perceived by many in France (in particular by General de Gaulle) as inextricably linked to the regeneration of French grandeur and the maintenance of national unity. Defence debates and commentary in France during the mid- to late-1950s thus provide insights into conceptions of French identity, but also evidence of the ongoing attempts to regenerate that identity itself, a process in which defence, past, present, and future, played an instrumental role.

### Considerations

In contrast to Britain, the political landscape of France has been coloured by numerous parties, which have at times shifted to form various alliances. As already outlined, it is not the purpose of the thesis to provide a comprehensive review of French political parties and figures for the period in question.<sup>5</sup> In general, however, three broad categories of political alignment can be discerned in mid-to late 1950s France: the Left, represented by the Communists and Socialists; the Center, represented by the Radical

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<sup>4</sup> This includes the term of General de Gaulle from June 1958 to January 1959 before he assumed the Presidency of France under the constitution of the Fifth Republic.

<sup>5</sup> For a concise categorization of political parties and commentary on political divisions in France see Finer, pp.273-279



Socialists (a politically left and economically right-oriented party) as well as the essentially Christian Democratic Popular Republican Movement; and the Right, comprised of parties including the Independent Republicans, the Gaullists and the Poujadists. From January 1956 to May 1957, Guy Mollet presided over a left-of-center, anti-Communist government of radicals and socialists. After the fall of Mollet's government, two Cabinets led by Radical Socialists followed in quick succession. The second fell in April 1958, paving the way for the crisis that led to de Gaulle's return to power as prime minister in June 1958.

### ASPECTS OF FRENCH MENTALITY, 1956-1958

#### National Defence as National Unity

Despite, or perhaps even *because* of French disunity, the defence debates of the mid- to late-1950s contain many careful, deliberate references to the 'unity' of France. Preoccupation with national unity was expressed in the National Assembly and the Press both explicitly, through calls for national unity in support of France's efforts in Algeria, and implicitly, through the concerted effort to bolster a national unity that was perceived to be under threat. In both instances, recourse to defence and associated imagery was prevalent.

#### *The Defence Consensus*

Much was made in the National Assembly of the French 'defence consensus' as an evidence of national unity. It was argued, for instance, that the National Assembly could be proud of having a defence commission that placed the desire to '....to aid the government in its task of national defence....' above all political differences and

preferences.<sup>6</sup> The Algerian problem was portrayed as a ‘national’ one, above party or government.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, cross-party support for the Government’s defence budget was appealed to on the basis of the need for unity, so that ‘....not only in the eyes of French public opinion, but in the eyes of the world, for once, we [will] show that we are united to meet our destiny and the tasks for which we are responsible.’<sup>8</sup>

On the surface, and apart from dissent from the far Left, most aspects of defence did seem to enjoy broad parliamentary support. In the official report of the National Assembly defence debates, statements followed by annotations describing ‘applause from the Left, Center, Right and several far Right members’ are not uncommon. Given the contemporary (and historical) political context in France, however, the importance attached to a national defence consensus is also indicative of a belief that failure to maintain this consensus might have dire consequences. According to *Le Figaro*, for instance,

....France, today, will not be able to survive but through the same burst of unity, of courage and of resolution that saved it: in the era of Joan, in Verdun, in 1944. The causes of our defeats were always the same... division, partisan sentiments, special interests outweigh the needs of the common good...The France of Joan of Arc, militarily defeated, financially ruined, morally divided, humiliated....the image of the abasement and the miseries where our disunity casts us.<sup>9</sup>

The moral was evident; national disunity and disunity in defence were two sides of the same coin; failure to sustain national unity would result in defeat for France and defeat for France equated to ‘humiliation’ and ‘abasement’.

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<sup>6</sup> Pierre Montel, *Journal Officiel, de la République de France, Assemblée Nationale*, n.131, p.5585, 6 December 1956.

<sup>7</sup> Aimé Paquet, *Journal Officiel*, n.88, p.3720, 29 July 1956

<sup>8</sup> Président du Conseil, *Journal Officiel*, 1958, n.26, p.1311, 7 March 1958

<sup>9</sup> ‘L’Enjeu du Combat’ *Le Figaro* 28 June 1956.



*National Unity and the Imagery of Defence*

Thus, the imagery of past victories and defeats was incorporated into appeals for national unity in the late 1950s. At the fortieth anniversary of France's victory at Verdun, for example, René Coty, President of France from 1954-1959, sought to 'exalt' the sacrifices of the soldiers in Algeria,<sup>10</sup> calling on the '....French nation to rally with the same spirit of self-sacrifice to meet the dangers that beset it....'<sup>11</sup> Even the 1957 commemorations of Bastille Day provided a context for calling on unity within the country, but also between the people and the armed forces. *Le Figaro*, for example, declared that the:

....people of Paris will have it in their heart's desire to show tomorrow to the combatants in Algeria the testimony of their fraternal communion... *There must be no place, in this day of the nation and the army, for the passions which divide* [emphasis added].<sup>12</sup>

*Le Figaro* went on to call on the nation to unify in support for the French military in Algeria, in order to prevent France from being threatened by 'the enemy within' (Communists).<sup>13</sup>

Speeches, editorials and commemorations thus employed the means and imagery of defence as a rallying tool and focal point for identity and unity. Particularly in the wake of General de Gaulle's return to power in May 1958, the concept of the army occupying a primary role in the nation's consciousness was prominently espoused. *Combat*, for instance, declared in July 1958, that around General de Gaulle, '....the army has been made a factor of reunion, communion ...from where the slogan emerges "*An army, a people, a soul* [emphasis added]"'.<sup>14</sup> Defence and, within defence, the armed

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<sup>10</sup> 'Quarantième anniversaire: M. Coty prononcera a Verdun un important discours' *Le Monde* 17-18 June 1956.

<sup>11</sup> *New York Herald Tribune (European Edition)* 18 June 1956.

<sup>12</sup> '14 Juillet: Un patriotique hommage de la France aux combattants d'Algérie' *Le Figaro* 14 July 1957.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> 'Les Fils de la Revolution' *Combat* 14 July 1958.



forces, was therefore evidently perceived as an instrument of value in the revival of French national unity and identity, rather than just a reflection of an existing unity and identity.

The army and nation were broadly perceived, or at least portrayed, as inseparable; a perception no doubt enhanced by the experience of France in 1940, when the French Army divided and France succumbed to Germany. Even as early as 1956, the sentiment was expressed in the National Assembly that ‘...national defence implies the participation of the citizen at every age....’<sup>15</sup> In the same year it was argued that the French Reserve had succeeded in giving back to the army its ‘true place in the nation.’<sup>16</sup>

After May 1958, this sentiment was expressed more prominently, perhaps in part because those in the armed forces who had helped to return de Gaulle to power shared it. In the context of suspicion surrounding the conduct and loyalty of members of the French forces and Algeria, concern was expressed that the unity and morale of the army might be broken, and that this in turn would undermine the French Republic itself: ‘When one has done everything to detach the army from the nation, one saps the bases of the Republic’, one member declared.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, in 1958, General Jean Valluy, then commander of NATO forces between Switzerland and the Baltic, declared:

‘The army must regain its outstanding place in the French community [...] in order that it may be an effective instrument in the service of the national policy [...] To draw a line between the civil and the military is well-nigh to impossible.’<sup>18</sup>

The link between the armed forces and the nation therefore reflected a sense of *construction* or deliberate promotion of the armed forces in the national consciousness. In 1957, the importance of deliberately constructing an ideological relationship between

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<sup>15</sup> Jean-Marie Le Pen, *Journal Officiel*, n.88, p.3718, 28 July 1956.

<sup>16</sup> Bourguès-Maunoury, *Journal Officiel*, n.131, p.5591, 6 December 1956.

<sup>17</sup> Alfred Malleret-Joinville, *Journal Officiel*, n.24, p.1109, 27 February 1958.

<sup>18</sup> General Jean Valluy in ‘A New Role for the French Army’ *New York Times* 27 December 1958.



the armed forces and the nation was emphasized by the Chief of the Air Staff, who advocated teaching young French people from primary school onwards why they would be called upon to fight for their country. The history taught in schools, the General declared, had to incorporate the ‘compatriots’ who had fought for the “....safeguarding of the sacred heritage of liberalism.”<sup>19</sup> Another General reportedly recommended that educators responsible for ‘national formation’ should gather a ‘precise inventory of national myths’ and institute sociological studies on ‘blood, soil and symbols’; geographical and historical factors he believed could be better exploited to serve identity and unity in France than the concept of race.<sup>20</sup>

### Grandeur

After his return to power in 1958, de Gaulle passionately expressed his concept of reconstruction and national renewal in the context of national grandeur and defence. The country, de Gaulle argued, found itself “....weakened, humiliated by the place to which she has been relegated, for the moment, by the ascension of a few others, in the hold of a sort of self-doubt, of neutralism...”<sup>21</sup> Only a return to greatness and power could allow France to escape from this condition, just as the glories of the Resistance had restored the *patrie* in the aftermath of 1940. Defence had already salvaged the grandeur of France; in 1940, it was argued, the national consciousness of France had been ‘torn apart’, but hat through the *Resistance*,

....the clairvoyance of a man [de Gaulle] and the courage of several thousand French, the *patrie* reemerged from the cataclysm, free and beautiful once more, lit golden by the light of a victory that was only partially hers, but which also brought its promises of grandeur....<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Général d’armée aérienne Chassin quoted in ‘L’armée inquiète à la recherche d’une “idéologie nationale”’ *Le Monde* 19 January 1957

<sup>20</sup> ‘L’armée inquiète à la recherche d’une “idéologie nationale”’ *Le Monde* 19 January 1957.

<sup>21</sup> ‘Quand Charles de Gaulle définit par les jeunes les raisons d’une espérance française’ *Combat* 23 January 1957.

<sup>22</sup> ‘Répondre à l’Histoire: I Nationalisme et ressentiment’ *Le Monde* 2 July 1957.

The nation, de Gaulle declared, was now

‘....ready to be reborn ardent and vigorous, and if necessary, victorious... *We will rediscover power, grandeur, and consequently, fraternity.* It is with all confidence that I come here to tell you with the most absolute certainty, that France will live, and will rediscover her grandeur, without which she would not be France [emphasis added].’<sup>23</sup>

### *Defence and National Grandeur*

Defence was perceived a critical factor in the rediscovery of French grandeur.

The 1957 defence budget, for instance, was criticized for being ‘....the budget of a nation which is nothing but a cog in a coalition, a cog...doomed to subaltern tasks...sacrificed to an increasingly peripheral strategy.’<sup>24</sup> France, it was argued, despite its difficulties, merited ‘....more than an attitude of begging satellite. This attitude with no prestige has counted for much in the dissatisfaction of the army....’<sup>25</sup>

Criticisms of defence policies that were perceived to be limiting France’s influence and prestige were often couched in terms of ‘*démission nationale*,’<sup>26</sup> literally translated as national resignation, but perhaps better described as ‘national abdication.’

*Le Monde*, for example, argued that nothing was forcing or ‘condemning’ France to ‘renounce its grandeur.’<sup>27</sup> Rather, France could and should ‘fully play her role.’<sup>28</sup>

According to one general, the desires for the “....grandeur and prosperity of the country ...[had] to find expression in a government capable of conceiving and executing the

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<sup>23</sup> General de Gaulle in ‘Le général De Gaulle à Fort-de-France’ *Combat* 14 August 1956.

<sup>24</sup> Monteil, *Journal Officiel*, n.131, p.5589, 6 December 1956

<sup>25</sup> ‘Relativité des indépendances nationales’ *Combat* 16 June 1958.

<sup>26</sup> ‘D’accord avec certaines des critiques de M. Pineau’ *Le Monde* 6 March 1956.

<sup>27</sup> ‘Répondre à l’Histoire: I Nationalism et ressentiment’ *Le Monde* 2 July 1957.

<sup>28</sup> ‘Les entretiens Franco-Britanniques ont fait apparaître une large mesure d’accord’ *Le Monde* 1 June 1958.



political designs of a great nation.”<sup>29</sup> The execution of such political designs depended on the existence of a strong and independent national defence.

*France's Armed Forces and National Grandeur*

The French armed forces were key to this strong and independent defence, and therefore to France's grandeur. The link between the armed forces and French conceptualizations of national grandeur is well illustrated by the clear appreciation articulated on all sides of the National Assembly for the French military. Praise was expressed for the 'admirable personnel' of the Navy,<sup>30</sup> while France, it was argued, could be proud of its Air Force which, despite its difficulties, had '....magnificently accomplished its intervention mission in the Middle East.'<sup>31</sup> Similarly, tribute was paid to the forces in Suez, on behalf of the 'whole Assembly.'<sup>32</sup>

Praise for the armed forces was most emphatically expressed in the context of national sacrifice for national defence. During the 1956 debate on the defence budget, for example, one of the *rapporteurs* declared that it was his duty to ask the members of the National Assembly

....to join in a statement of admiration and gratitude with respect to all those who, with the air force, *at the cost of the hardest sacrifices, assure the defence and security of our national heritage* in overseas operational theatres, particularly in Algeria [emphasis added].<sup>33</sup>

The Minister of Defence echoed this sentiment; '....we each of us have the right to be proud, and I bow with emotion before *those who have spilled their blood to safeguard our*

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<sup>29</sup> 'Le Général Bilotte' *Combat* 30 October 1956.

<sup>30</sup> Olivier Harty de Pierrebourg, *Journal Officiel*, n.131, p.5586, 6 December 1956.

<sup>31</sup> Louis Christaens, *Journal Officiel*, n.131, p.5612, 6 December 1956

<sup>32</sup> Maurice Bourgué-Maunoury, *Journal Officiel*, 1956, n.131, p.5594, 6 December 1956.

<sup>33</sup> Christaens, Secretary of State for the Air Force, *Journal Officiel*, n.131, p.5612, 6 December 1956.

*nation* [emphasis added].<sup>34</sup> Such remarks were generally greeted with applause from all sides but the extreme Left.<sup>35</sup>

It is pertinent to the underlying inquiry of the thesis that advocates of French involvement in Algeria sought to present French intervention in the context of the defence of France and its national heritage. Interestingly, however, French intervention in Algeria may have failed to heal fissures in French society precisely because its defensive credentials were questionable. For example, the far Left framed its opposition to French intervention in Algeria in part on the grounds that such action was *not* in the spirit of the ‘....most glorious [French] military traditions....’ demonstrated at Valmy and Verdun.<sup>36</sup> The *defensive* connotations of both Valmy and Verdun in French historiography suggest that for the far Left, the absence of a convincing defensive justification for action in Algeria conflicted with the French tradition of military heroism, the perception of which they shared with the Right.<sup>37</sup>

Nevertheless, the notion of continuity between past and present sacrifice was important in appealing to both the grandeur and cohesion of the nation. For de Gaulle, for instance, France’s future would “...begin again in those places which have continued to serve and be devoted to it, such as Saint-Cyr [the French military academy for officers].”<sup>38</sup> Rhetorically, the armed forces were therefore an emotive instrument around which to rally French grandeur and with it, French identity.

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<sup>34</sup> Bourguès-Maunoury, *Journal Officiel*, n.131, p.5591, 6 December 1956.

<sup>35</sup> See, for instance, Christiaens, *Journal Officiel*, n.26, p.1155, 28 February 1958.

<sup>36</sup> *L’Humanité* 12 July 1957.

<sup>37</sup> For an example of commentary on conceptions of the French military tradition from the Right see George Bonnet, *Journal Officiel*, n.24, p.1102, 27 February 1958.

<sup>38</sup> ‘Le Général de Gaulle exprime aux Saint-Cyriens sa conviction d’un renouveau de la France’ *Le Figaro* 3 August 1956.



## Mission

Related to the notion of continuity in French grandeur was the concept of national mission, which appeared most resonant in the context of defence. For example, in 1957, René Coty utilized celebrations for Joan of Arc to rally unity for French military action in Algeria. Joan's victories had in the past 'confirmed' the providential mission and destiny of France, a destiny that bound French struggles in the late 1950s to those of the past. As an official at the 1957 celebrations declared:

'For France...God sent a saint. At the very moment where her existence was threatened, [...] God showed that the country should live to fulfill an exceptional mission [...] The values which still today constitute the grandeur of France are Christian values. Let us think with emotion of those who fight and who die today. Let their sacrifice not be in vain.'<sup>39</sup>

France's weakened post-war status, however, particularly in the realm of defence, was perceived to be impeding France's fulfillment of her preordained mission. General de Gaulle, for instance, speaking at the military academy of Saint-Cyr, spoke of the French 'vocation' as "...a profound and muffled cry of France which, in the depths in which it finds itself plunged today, aspires to the strength, the nobility, the grandeur she has always known, and thanks to which she will be reborn."<sup>40</sup>

Ensuring France could dispose of the *means* of defence was important to enabling France to execute her providential mission. This French mission was, not coincidentally, appealed to in attempts to seek approval in the National Assembly for the defence budget of 1957. As one member of the National Assembly declared, '[w]hen, by virtue of its geographical position and historical role, a country must assume a mission such as that which falls in this moment to France, it has the duty to make the necessary sacrifices.'<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Unnamed official cited in 'La fête de Sainte Jeanne d'Arc célébrée avec une exceptionnelle solennité' Le Figaro 13 May 1957.

<sup>40</sup> General de Gaulle in 'Le Général de Gaulle exprime aux Saint-Cyriens sa conviction d'un renouveau de la France' Le Figaro 3 August, 1956.

<sup>41</sup> Emanuel Temple, Journal Officiel, n.131, p.5601, 6 December 1956



Indeed, for advocates of French intervention in Algeria, French involvement was a necessary sacrifice for sustaining France's mission. As one French general declared, the Algerian conflict was '....a criteria of effective action,...a symbol of the French vocation.'<sup>42</sup> For critics of France's policy, however, the use of force in Algeria was in stark contrast to the interests of the French vocation. For example, in 1956, the President of the French Union emphasized how voluntary association between France and its overseas territories was the only way to save the French Union and to '....guarantee with it the perpetuity of our national destiny.'<sup>43</sup> Similarly, an article in *Le Monde* appealed to France to concentrate on technical and financial assistance to developing countries, arguing that '....France must not deliberately sacrifice her universal vocation for her imperial vocation.'<sup>44</sup>

## Freedom

Closely related to the idea of mission in French mentality was the notion of the defence of liberty. On the international plane, France was associated with the defence of the 'free world'<sup>45</sup> where, *Le Monde* argued, she wanted to exert influence in a climate of 'liberty, equality [and] fraternity.'<sup>46</sup> Similarly, *Combat* wrote that within NATO, France could be '....a champion...of the liberties of peoples, which is its most noble tradition.'<sup>47</sup>

In the context of military policy in Algeria, however, liberty was a contested value. Supporters of the war argued that the soldiers fighting in Algeria were uniting to

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<sup>42</sup> Chef d'état-major général Général Ely's article reproduced in part in 'Le pays n'a pas à craindre son armée' *Le Monde* 23 September 1958.

<sup>43</sup> Albert Sarraut, 'Assez du régime faux de l'administration directe dans l'outre-mer; assez de la politique du plus fort: c'est la politique du plus juste qu'il faut faire' *Le Monde* 6 Jan 1956

<sup>44</sup> 'Les tentations de l'abandon et du recours à la force' *Le Monde*, 16 March 1956.

<sup>45</sup> 'Les entretiens Franco-Britanniques ont fait apparaître une large mesure d'accord' *Le Monde* 1 June 1958.

<sup>46</sup> 'La France s'Interroge sur son Avenir Outre-Mer' *Combat*, 9 March 1956.

<sup>47</sup> 'Relativité des indépendances nationales' *Combat* 16 June 1958.



rekindle the spirit of the Resistance,<sup>48</sup> and that France remained the nation that had granted freedom to Morocco and Tunisia; success would be guaranteed, they claimed ‘....if France never forgets that she is the country of Liberty’.<sup>49</sup> In 1958, Hamani Diori, Vice President of National Assembly declared that “[o]ur greatest joy is to state that France, after 1789 and 1848, is still capable of taking the lead...each time that it is a matter of freeing mankind.”<sup>50</sup>

Yet for others, particularly, but not exclusively on the Left, military intervention in Algeria was anything but action in defence of liberty; instead, policy in Algeria appeared to be contradicting France’s image as champion of liberty. A cartoon in the French press, for instance, depicted the Bastille, symbol of French Liberty, crowned with a paratrooper and a rifle.<sup>51</sup> Communist deputies in particular criticized Algerian policy as contrary to the principle of liberty. To illustrate his point, one such deputy referred to a Frenchman who reportedly had refused to serve in Algeria on the grounds that he wanted to remain faithful to ‘the French traditions’ of liberty and justice.<sup>52</sup>

## Civilization

### *Algeria and French civilization*

Like liberty, civilization was ingrained as a French attribute and tradition that gained resonance in the context of defence. Again, however, civilization as a national value was being contested by those who advocated French intervention in Algeria in defence of civilization, and those who called for an end to a military conflict they believed contradicted France’s tradition as guardian of civilized ideals. General de

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<sup>48</sup> ‘Répondre à l’Histoire: II Jeunesse et grandeur’ *Le Monde* 3 July 1957.

<sup>49</sup> ‘Nous voulons assurer aux populations africaines un avenir de prospérité et de paix’ *Le Populaire* 22 March 1956.

<sup>50</sup> ‘Hamani Diori, Vice President of the National Assembly, ‘M.Hamani Diori: la France a entrepris une grande expérience de décolonisation’ *Le Monde* 23 April 1958.

<sup>51</sup> ‘Bitter July in Paris’ *Sunday Times* 14 July 1957.

Gaulle, for example, who supported the Algerian war, and whose return to power was facilitated by the conflict, framed Algeria in relation to civilization, arguing that ‘....since the end of the war the French Army has been the only one in the world to fight for the great causes of civilization.’<sup>53</sup> Critics, on the other hand, wanted to pursue a more ‘just’ and ‘humane’ policy towards ‘....peoples for whom we have assumed the task of leading to a higher destiny.’<sup>54</sup>

Regardless of political persuasion, the notion of a civilizing mission cast France as the nation destined to extend its beneficial and progressive influence on less fortunate states. France was argued to have brought to ‘five continents’ not just material benefits, “....but also a moral, spiritual, intellectual and cultural progress that no other nation in the world has been able to equal...France has known for centuries how to bring to man the sense of ...dignity and her grandeur.”<sup>55</sup> France was similarly argued to be the one remaining ‘....authentic representatives of civilization...and culture....’, from whom other peoples in need of help and guidance could benefit, and who could be ‘tutored’<sup>56</sup> towards the responsibilities of culture, independence and freedom.<sup>57</sup>

### *Civilization and the Nuclear Debate*

Diverse appeals to civilization were also made in the context of the nuclear debate. Critics of the French preoccupation with a nuclear deterrent argued that France had ““other tasks to accomplish””, and should concentrate not on bombs, but on the

<sup>52</sup> Mme Prin, *Journal Officiel*, n.24 , p.1122, 26 February 1958.

<sup>53</sup> General de Gaulle in ‘De Gaulle évoque à la Guadeloupe “les grandes causes de la civilisation”’ *Combat* 13 August 1956.

<sup>54</sup> Sarraut, ‘Assez du régime faux de l’administration directe dans l’outre-mer; assez de la politique du plus fort: c’est la politique du plus juste qu’il faut faire’ *Le Monde* 6 January 1956

<sup>55</sup> M. Monderville, ‘Ne pas oublier l’oeuvre de la France’ *Le Monde* 11 March 1958.

<sup>56</sup> ‘Colonialisme et Service Public International’ *Le Monde* 4 February 1956.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*



design of reactors for the supply of energy, a position “in line” with the idea of a “great civilizing nation.”<sup>58</sup>

Advocates of French acquisition of nuclear weapons, however, argued that the fearsome power of atomic bombs might finally bring an end to war, and that as such, in ‘...the tasks of protecting peace, in those of domesticating the atom for the ends of civilization, the right of France is to be present, without restrictions.’<sup>59</sup>

## Independence

A concern over ‘restrictions’ on France in nuclear affairs was indicative of the continuing importance of national independence in French mentality. Fear of losing independence in defence was directly linked to fears of losing French grandeur and specificity. For example, those who expressed reservations about the Atlantic Alliance, such as General de Gaulle, argued that France was exhibiting a “vulgar renunciation” in the sphere of national defence, and a no less “detestable” renunciation in seeking to “melt France down” into the Atlantic and European communities “...where her independence, her shape and her soul risk [ed] disappearing.”<sup>60</sup> Even the far Left, so fiercely opposed to the Algerian war, articulated their objections on the grounds that military intervention in Algeria ran counter to French interests, and was a policy that ‘...ruins the country and that degrades France to the rank of a power of third order, *deprived of its independence* [emphasis added].’<sup>61</sup>

To preserve grandeur and specificity, France had to defend herself and her values *independently*, particularly in order to rectify the stain of capitulation in the Second

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<sup>58</sup> ‘De trop modestes réserves ne permettent pas à la France de gâcher son plutonium. Un nouvel essai de bombe n’apporterait d’ailleurs rien au monde’ *Combat* 6 July 1958.

<sup>59</sup> ‘Les monopoles de l’arme atomique’ *Combat* 3 July 1958

<sup>60</sup> ‘Quand Charles de Gaulle définit par les jeunes les raisons d’une espérance française’ *Combat* 23 January 1957.

<sup>61</sup> Villon, *Journal Officiel*, n.26, p.1312, 7 March 1958



World War. While some expressed the opinion that France could not stand alone (and that to even encourage a belief it could was tantamount to ‘treason’<sup>62</sup>), they were often met with stark opposition, and on occasion accused of manifesting the ‘the same reflexes’ shown in the past by Vichy and Pétain.<sup>63</sup>

A strong and independent defence was therefore not just perceived as the guarantor of French greatness and specificity, but as evidence of the national willingness to preserve the country and its heritage; a willingness that had been called into question and had now to be reaffirmed. As an article in *Le Monde* declared, France should seek to regain its ‘....independence in international politics, which does not in the slightest mean remaining isolated, but, through our cohesion, our strength, our authority, *show everywhere a France standing up for the defence of its culture and its legitimate interests* [emphasis added].’<sup>64</sup> Similarly, the armed forces were described as ‘....more than ever, ...the gauge of our national independence and the tangible sign of *our willingness to defend our heritage* [emphasis added].’<sup>65</sup> Even more explicitly, the *Manchester Guardian* reported Coty as saying: “‘A country whose sons hesitate to give all for its salvation cannot survive.’”<sup>66</sup>

The emphasis on a need to manifest a determined and independent defence is suggestive of the profound impact that failure in defence exerted on French mentality. Failure in defence had undermined the grandeur of the nation, and it was therefore in the context of defence that French grandeur had to be re-confirmed. Algeria once again appeared particularly significant. As one deputy argued, “[i]t is within herself that France must today seek her security. She must affirm her determination to remain a great

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<sup>62</sup> ‘Croire à la France seule est une folie. Y laisser croire, une trahison’ *Le Figaro* 6 March 1956.

<sup>63</sup> ‘D’accord avec certaines des critiques de M. Pineau’ *Le Monde* 6 March 1956.

<sup>64</sup> ‘Ou allons-nous?’ *Le Monde* 16 August 1956.

<sup>65</sup> Jean Crouzier, *Journal Officiel*, n. 24, p.1097, 27 February 1958

<sup>66</sup> ‘M. Coty calls for Unity’ *Manchester Guardian* 25 June 1956.



nation before the eyes of the whole world. She must force her victory with her own hands....”<sup>67</sup> It is thus unsurprising that the argument was espoused that it was in France’s interest to manufacture domestically those materials for defence that she was at the time obliged to purchase abroad.<sup>68</sup>

The military means for ensuring French grandeur and independence were, however, contested. For some, great nation status involved the maintenance of sea power,<sup>69</sup> for others a greater international role was necessary, centered on, but not confined to, the West.<sup>70</sup> For advocates of nuclear armament, possession of a French nuclear capability was essential to French greatness; only states with nuclear weapons could be ‘...respected and ... make their voice be heard in world affairs.’<sup>71</sup> France therefore had to be prepared to meet the ‘....financial sacrifices that the construction of nuclear weapons implies if she wants to remain a first rank country.’<sup>72</sup> For critics of a French nuclear deterrent, if France were ever to really be in a position to exert an independent policy, she had to instead ‘....seize the occasion to play her role in détente, in refusing the installation on her soil of missile launchers, and by sustaining the idea of a [disarmament] conference....’<sup>73</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The aspects of French identity outlined in Chapter Five were manifest in the defence debates of mid- to late- 1950s France. ‘National’ traits of grandeur, mission, liberty and civilization continued to exist as powerful elements of the French identity and were both revealed and reinforced in the context of defence. Thus, despite expressed

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<sup>67</sup> Jean Dides, *Journal Officiel*, n.26, p.1304, 7 March 1958.

<sup>68</sup> Achille Auban, *Journal Officiel*, n.26, p.1146, 28 February 1958.

<sup>69</sup> Monteil, *Journal Officiel*, n.26, p.1310, 7 March 1958.

<sup>70</sup> de Gaulle reported in ‘Le Role de la France’ *Le Monde* 17 June 1958.

<sup>71</sup> Crouzier, *Journal Officiel*, n.131, p.5588, 6 December 1956

differences in policies, de Gaulle was, to some extent, quite justified in saying that “[w]hen it is a question of France, of liberty, of the grandeur of the mission of the Republic, we immediately find a common language and common sentiments.”<sup>74</sup>

The French national mentality reflected in discourse on defence was nonetheless paradoxical in the sense that powerful ‘national’ traits and values coexisted with an implicit awareness of the potential for national disunity. The identity themes of grandeur, mission, liberty and civilization were enlisted in support of different defence policies, yet defence, and the armed forces in particular, were called on as unifying factors. This is exemplified by the open recourse made to the symbolism of defence, and in the explicit appeals made to the nation for unity in support of the armed forces.

Also paradoxically, the appeals to grandeur, particularly in the context of national defence, stemmed from an apprehension over national disunity, but served to portray the image of a great and unified French nation, sure of its identity. The case of France consequently provides an illustration of national identity regeneration in progress, and illustrates the striking significance of defence in this context.

Defence not only played a role in the historical construction of a French identity based on grandeur, mission, liberty and civilization, but defence itself continued to exert an impact on these themes in the reaffirmation of national identity and unity in mid- to late-1950s France. The following chapter addresses how defence similarly impacted upon French conceptions of Europe, and of France’s European identity.

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<sup>72</sup> ‘Michel Debré, ‘J.P. David et le Général Gaullois: La France doit posséder une bombe atomique’ Le Monde 7 March 1958.

<sup>73</sup> Pierre Villon, Journal Officiel, n.26, p.1312, 7 March 1958

<sup>74</sup> General de Gaulle in ‘Le Général de Gaulle à Fort-de-Franc “La Martinique est une réussite française éclatante”’ Combat 16 August 1956.



# CHAPTER SEVEN – FRANCE AND EUROPE: EUROPE AS GREATER FRANCE

## PAST EXPERIENCES AND CONTEMPORARY IMPERATIVES OF DEFENCE

### INTRODUCTION

In the mid- to late-1950s, the question of French accession to the European Economic Community (EEC) was a delicate one. Only a few years earlier, in August 1954, the French Assembly had rejected proposals for the creation of a European Defence Community (EDC), to the embarrassment of France's political leadership; EDC had, after all, been a French initiative. In 1954, the government of Prime Minister Mendès-France had appealed for the ratification of the Treaty implementing a European Army primarily on the grounds that it was a solution to the question of German rearmament, a means of binding the German Federal Republic to the West, and of instituting Franco-German reconciliation.<sup>1</sup>

The EDC plan, however, had been voted down by 319 votes to 264, with objections raised, among others, that the plan would reduce France to '....the same ranks as two *vanquished peoples and three small nations* [the other members of the Six - emphasis added]....'<sup>2</sup> and that it would threaten French sovereignty, meaning the 'end of France.'<sup>3</sup> France's re-invention of itself as a victor in the Second World War, based in large part on the imagery of grandeur and independence in defence, did not sit comfortably with the prospect of integration in defence.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Extracts from the debate in the French National Assembly on 29-30 August 1954' Document 5.9 in David Weigall and Peter Stirk (eds.), The Origins and Development of the European Community (Leicester and London: Leicester University Press, 1992) p.85. For an overview of the threat of the Soviet Union as a factor in French debates on the EDC, see Pierre Guillen, 'The Role of the Soviet Union as a Factor in the French Debates on the European Defence Community' *Journal of European History* 2 (1) (1996), pp.71-84.

<sup>2</sup> General Aumeran in 'Extracts' Document 5.9 in Weigall and Stirk (eds.), p.86.

<sup>3</sup> M. Herriot in 'Extracts' Document 5.9 in Weigall and Stirk (eds.) pp.86-87.



The EDC had again illustrated French disunity, albeit in a political, rather than strictly military, context. Unsurprisingly, echoes of disunity over the EDC were still evident in debates on the EEC, which followed the signing of the Treaties of Rome in 1955. As early as 1956, Guy Mollet reminded the Assembly that his very first words on the Rome Treaties had been ‘....an appeal to overcome our past differences, to dedicate ourselves to the future.’<sup>4</sup>

Similarly, in 1956, Christian Pineau, Foreign Affairs Minister, declared his ‘....objective...to underline once more the necessity for each of us to put aside their personal concerns to ensure the success of the common task at hand.’<sup>5</sup> Indeed, Pineau made a point of disassociating the EEC from the EDC, emphasizing the EEC’s aspirations to peaceful cooperation, and declaring it to be a project that was ‘....totally independent...of the one that once divided us.’<sup>6</sup>

Concerns over the maintenance of national unity therefore remained in evidence in debates on the EEC. Yet in 1957, in contrast to 1954, the French Assembly ratified the Rome Treaties that established the EEC, after the Popular Republican Movement withdrew their opposing order of the day on the grounds of ‘national solidarity.’<sup>7</sup> Guy Mollet subsequently declared that a near-unanimous vote in favour of the Treaties of Rome establishing the EEC would be ‘....proof that on a problem of national and European importance such as this one we have just been discussing, we are capable, above party differences, to define together a common policy.’<sup>8</sup>

France’s rejection of the EDC and acceptance of the EEC give rise to two principal questions that are of interest to this thesis: Firstly, how did aspects of national

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<sup>4</sup> Guy Mollet, *Journal Officiel, Assemblée Nationale*, n.80, p.3385, 11 July 1956.

<sup>5</sup> Christian Pineau, Minister for Foreign Affairs *Journal Officiel*, n.80, p.3349, 10 July 1956.

<sup>6</sup> Pineau, *Journal Officiel*, n.80, p.3348, 10 July 1956.

<sup>7</sup> See Pierre Teitgen, *Journal Officiel*, n.5, p.217, 22 January 1957.

<sup>8</sup> Mollet, *Journal Officiel*, n.5, p.217, 22 January 1957.



mentality discussed in Chapters Five and Six influence French conceptions of Europe and of France's role within Europe; and secondly, what role, if any, did defence play in influencing the National Assembly's ratification of the Treaties of Rome? In other words, did the National Assembly accept integration through the EEC because the role of defence was sufficiently minimized, or had the strategic landscape and the requirements of defence somehow changed since 1954 to render integration more acceptable to French mentality?

This chapter examines the influence of the aspects of French identity discussed in Chapter Five on French conceptualizations of Europe between 1956 and 1958. The chapter also assesses the more direct impact of defence on French perceptions of Europe's identity. As with previous chapters, primary sources consist of legislative debates and press commentary, and the focus is on broad political conceptions, rather than on specific party lines and personalities.

### **DEFENCE, IDENTITY AND FRENCH CONCEPTIONS OF EUROPE: GRAND VISIONS**

Press and parliamentary debates on the EEC from 1956-58 indicate that aspects of French mentality discussed in Chapters Five and Six were mobilized in support of very conflicting perspectives on European integration. Grandeur, 'vocation', independence, and to some extent liberty and civilization, were interpreted as evidence to prove or disprove the value of European integration and the need for French participation in it. In influencing these aspects of mentality, defence consequently continued to exert an indirect impact on French attitudes to Europe and France's role within it.

#### **Grandeur**

Grandeur, an aspect of French national mentality entrenched in the context of defence, exerted a profound influence on French conceptualizations of Europe and

France's role within it. How to best preserve national grandeur was amongst the most divisive issues to dominate the National Assembly debates on the Treaties of Rome. The predominantly Center-Left governments that held power during the period in question urged acceptance of the Treaties on the basis that they would increase France's independence and influence, while the far Right and far Left rejected the notion of integration in the EEC, albeit from differing ideological perspectives. While defence was not always explicitly referred to, its underlying influence on the debates in the context of its impact on national grandeur remained undiluted. The notion of *defending* national grandeur remained equally pertinent.

***'French Grandeur Lies in the Rapid Construction of Europe'***

For figures such as Christian Pineau, Minister for Foreign Affairs, there was little to be gained in the cause of French grandeur by standing aloof as Europe united, and everything to be gained by a European collaboration that would enable France to carry on fulfilling a global role.<sup>9</sup> For advocates of European integration the answer was simple: '....French grandeur lies in a rapid construction of Europe.'<sup>10</sup>

In effect, some considered it impossible for France to stay out of the process of European integration precisely because she was a 'great power.' Not participating in the European scheme was tantamount to a national 'resignation': '....my predominant concern is French grandeur... We know...that it is not necessary to be a great power to be a great nation...But it is impossible for a great nation to resign [*se démissionner*].'<sup>11</sup>

Moreover, critics argued that resisting integration in favour of 'proud solitude' would impact negatively on French grandeur; Europe was perceived not just as a means

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<sup>9</sup>Pineau, *Journal Officiel*, n.80, p.3349, 10 July 1956.

<sup>10</sup>Jean Le Bail, *Journal Officiel*, n.3, p.107, 17 January 1957.

<sup>11</sup>Albert Lalle, *Journal Officiel*, n.4, p.155, 18 January 1957.



of increasing French grandeur, but as an essential step in safeguarding grandeur itself.<sup>12</sup> In particular, advocates argued that with growing European nuclear expertise, France's influence too could be increased. As *Le Monde* wrote in 1958, '....such an enterprise...would contribute to giving the continent weight...[and] to reinforcing the authority of France....'<sup>13</sup> Interestingly, the question of nuclear research and its relationship to French grandeur was remarked on favorably even by those who did not necessarily support either the European Community or a military application of atom technology.<sup>14</sup>

### *A Province of Europe*

For some critics of the European project, however, the Rome Treaties constituted a threat to both French grandeur and French independence. In 1956, for instance, the Foreign Affairs Minister was accused of seeking to advance French grandeur through European integration without realizing that such integration singularly contradicted the grandeur of France.<sup>15</sup> The Common Market, critics claimed, might result in the '....disappearance of France as a state. What we do not want is to simply become a province of Little Europe. What we desire is for our country to play its role today in Europe through its own resources, its own genius....'<sup>16</sup>

For the fiercest critics, even the Euratom provisions for nuclear cooperation in Europe, set out in the Rome Treaties, would undermine France's influence and prestige. The Communists in particular argued that Euratom would damage, not enhance, France's technical ability in the nuclear field, and urged the preservation of an independent national atomic energy program, claiming that France's 'youth' wanted '....atomic energy

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<sup>12</sup> Le Bail, *Journal Officiel*, n.3, p.108, 17 January 1957.

<sup>13</sup> 'Cavalier Seul' *Le Monde* 24-25 August 1958.

<sup>14</sup> See, for instance, Teitigen, *Journal Officiel*, n.78, p.3259, 5 July 1956.

<sup>15</sup> Victor Luis-Réoyo, *Journal Officiel*, n.78, p.3259, 5 July 1956.

<sup>16</sup> Pierre Cot, *Journal Officiel*, n.5, p.201, 22 January 1957.

to serve the grandeur of France and the prosperity of its people.’<sup>17</sup> For the Communists it was Euratom itself that would imply a ‘national resignation’, an

....abandonment by France ...of its scientific and technical lead in atomic energy...which constitutes the energy of the future, of the immediate future. The proposal submitted therefore springs from a spirit of national resignation.<sup>18</sup>

## Mission

### *The European Vocation*

Coexisting with the preoccupation for independence was the perception of a French mission in Europe. France perceived a leadership role for itself in Europe that retained echoes of the defensive mission that had helped shape French national mentality and still occupied a prominent place in French historiography. The impact of defence in shaping France’s sense of mission in Europe, discussed in Chapter Five, was consequently evident, albeit not always explicit, in debates on the Treaties of Rome. In 1957, for example, Guy Mollet remarked that in the EEC, France could ‘....offer Italy hope other than communism or fascism, save Benelux from being drawn into the sphere of Germany...’<sup>19</sup> Subconsciously or otherwise, Mollet even spoke to a sense of mission in his appeal to the Assembly to ratify the Rome Treaties:

On the future of France’s decisions...depends the future not only of the French people, but once of her the neighboring peoples... You can introduce them all to better tomorrows, or condemn them to mediocrity and chance.<sup>20</sup>

France’s perception of her humanitarian ‘mission’ was particularly in evidence in discussions on Euratom. Institutionalizing peaceful cooperation in the field of atomic

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<sup>17</sup> Maurice Kriegel-Valrimont, *Journal Officiel*, n.80, p.3355, 10 July, 1956.

<sup>18</sup> Jean Rieu, *Journal Officiel*, n.81, p.3386. 11 July 1956.

<sup>19</sup> Mollet, *Journal Officiel*, n.5, p.216, 22 January 1957.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*



energy would be for ‘....the benefit of mankind’<sup>21</sup> and in working towards it France would have ‘....worked for the good of humanity and the organization of peace.’<sup>22</sup>

The perception that French grandeur would be reinforced through Europe as a vehicle for the fulfillment of France’s ‘mission’ was specifically articulated. It was argued, for example, that France wanted to ‘....continue to ensure in the world the vocation which is hers...she must accept cooperation in the European framework.’<sup>23</sup> De Gaulle explicitly referred to the sense of ‘mission’ he shared with Adenauer as a ‘pioneer’ in the creation of Europe,<sup>24</sup> and portrayed French leadership in Europe in historical terms. De Gaulle’s spokesman, for example, responding to criticisms of the slow pace of change in the Fifth Republic, replied that de Gaulle should not be expected ““....to build the empire of Charlemagne in a month.””<sup>25</sup>

For some, this French mission of leadership in Europe was an inherent right, and, if anything, the government should be criticized for not playing a sufficiently dynamic role at the heart of Europe: ‘Our government does not even dare to propose Paris as the capital of Europe. One might as soon say that it also takes away from us the directing role to which we can legitimately lay claim amongst the peoples of Europe!’<sup>26</sup>

France’s relationship with Europe was often framed in terms of an unequivocally entwined association, one which resonated with past, present and future implications. Sometimes this relationship was expressed non-specifically, as though it were simply taken for granted and required no further explanation. As one deputy declared:

We are sure that what is necessary...is a strong and coherent Europe, concerned with lifting herself up to the level of her glorious past, animated

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<sup>21</sup> René Pleven, *Journal Officiel*, n.80, p.3335, 10 July 1956.

<sup>22</sup> Lapie, *Journal Officiel*, n.81, p.3379, 11 July 1956.

<sup>23</sup> Teitgen, *Journal Officiel*, n.78, p.3260, 5 July 1956.

<sup>24</sup> ‘La reoncentre de Gaulle et Adenauer’ *Combat* 13-14 September 1958.

<sup>25</sup> ‘Charlemagne to de Gaulle’ *Christian Science Monitor* 17 September 1958.

<sup>26</sup> ‘Assez d’équivoques!’ par le général Bilotte, ancien ministre’ *Combat* 15-16 March 1958.



above all by a robust faith in her future, *which cannot be separated from that of France* [emphasis added].<sup>27</sup>

Similarly, the French were argued to have been ‘....the first to launch the idea of Europe, of the European Defence Community, of Euratom and of the comeback of Europe.’<sup>28</sup> Likewise, in 1958, France’s Foreign Minister, Maurice Couve de Murville, stressed that ‘....France’s future, like her past, was inextricably bound with Western Europe and the ‘Atlantic world’ because of the “....national imperatives of our geography, our history, our economy and of the character even of our civilization.”’<sup>29</sup>

Many accepted this relationship as so entrenched that the question of a unified Europe emerging in the absence of France seemed unimaginable. A lack of French participation would doom the emerging Community, because ‘....without us, the community project cannot be realized and we will have to bear the heavy responsibility of having, yet again, caused an attempt at European economic integration to fail.’<sup>30</sup> France’s decision on accession would consequently have severe implications ‘....for the future of France as for the future of Europe.’<sup>31</sup>

### *A Wider Vocation*

European integration was also perceived by some of its activists as a means to fulfilling France’s broader mission in Africa. Indeed, independence in this regard was argued to signal the renunciation of France’s global mission, while European cooperation, particularly in the sphere of nuclear energy, was portrayed as vital for the ‘....mission of France, in its overseas territories as well as the whole world.’<sup>32</sup> Primacy in Africa could only be accomplished within this European framework, but again, this primacy was

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<sup>27</sup> Felix Gouin, *Journal Officiel*, n.78, p.3257, 5 July 1956.

<sup>28</sup> Paul Reynaud, *Journal Officiel*, n.5, p.203, 22 January 1957. See also M. Reynaud, *Journal Officiel*, n.80, p.3361, 10 July 1956.

<sup>29</sup> ‘France stresses ties to the West’ *New York Times* 26 June 1958.

<sup>30</sup> Jules Ninine, *Journal Officiel*, n.3, p.120, 17 January 1957.

<sup>31</sup> Mollet, *Journal Officiel*, n.5, p.216, 22 January 1957.



altruistic in nature; France, it was claimed, ‘....will not be able to accomplish its mission in Africa by its means alone. *It is with the whole of Europe that we will guide Africa towards a better destiny* [emphasis added].’<sup>33</sup>

Another advocate of European integration expressed his conception of France’s global vocation even more forcibly:

I think I remain faithful to our national traditions in affirming that the prestige of our country does not reside only in what it has realized within its territory, but also in what it has brought to the world and in what the world has come to search for in ...[France]. Whether it is the works of our artists, our scientists or the generous ideas to which we gave birth, our glory is that there is nothing great on our planet that does not owe something to France. But the past must not suffice for us. Our role is not over. The world awaits still more from us and, so that the world is not disappointed, France must live.<sup>34</sup>

Similarly, while De Gaulle certainly foresaw French grandeur within Europe, he too suggested that Europe should not be the sole outlet for French influence. In 1958, for instance, the General declared that France ‘belonged’ to the West, but need not be ‘confined’ to it.<sup>35</sup>

Indeed, critics of the EEC feared that emphasis on European integration would distract France from her wider vocation, rather than enhance her fulfillment of it. For example, France’s situation was argued to be comparable to England’s, in that France held overseas territories in which she played a central role, and which could not be overlooked:

...To admit therefore that France could today enter the Common European Market without its overseas territories is first of all to admit that the French Union no longer exists and that France renounces its African vocation because the territories for which she is responsible will prevent her from pursuing her new European vocation. This we cannot do.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Teitgen, *Journal Officiel*, n.78, p.3259, 5 July 1956.

<sup>33</sup> Emmanuel Temple, *Journal Officiel*, n.3, p.112, 17 January 1957.

<sup>34</sup> Pierre André, *Journal Officiel*, n.80, p.3349, 10 July, 1956.

<sup>35</sup> ‘Le rôle de la France’ *Le Monde* 17 June 1958. See also ‘De Gaulle Weighs World Role: His Friday Statement in Paris’ *New York Times* 17 June 1958.

<sup>36</sup> Felix Viallet, *Journal Officiel*, n.5, p.190, 23 January 1957.



A ‘Eurafrica’, rather than a wholly European entity, was perceived as key to the fulfillment of France’s mission; ‘....this Eurafrica, as indispensable to Europe as to Africa, a historical task for a generation, the only chance for our territories of a better destiny, the only chance for France to continue her mission....’<sup>37</sup>

## Freedom

The tension between a European and global mission was to a lesser extent also reflected in French conceptions of liberty in the context of European integration. On the one hand, liberty was framed in a universal, rather than European context. One deputy, for example, declared his belief in ‘....the certainty that the mission of France is not terminated and *that defending France is defending the essential liberties of man* [emphasis added].’<sup>38</sup>

On the other hand, the defence of liberty was closely associated with European integration and European identity. The relationship between defence, liberty and Europe was partly rooted in the imagery of national resistance in the Second World War. This imagery – founded in the fight for liberty against tyranny – was even utilized in Franco-German rapprochement. De Gaulle and Adenauer, for example, affirmed in 1957 that despite the Second World War they had never been enemies; rather they a common bond united them, because both had been involved in ‘clandestine resistance’ against Hitler.<sup>39</sup>

France and Germany were thus symbolically joined in an imagery that coupled defence and the struggle for liberty in a common ‘European’ defence that predated the end of Second World War. In this context, defence exerted a more direct impact on the conceptualization of Europe and the perception, or at least portrayal, of a common

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<sup>37</sup> Teitgen, *Journal Officiel*, n.1, p.14, 15 January 1957.

<sup>38</sup> Réoyo, *Journal Officiel*, n.78, p.3288, 5 July 1956.

<sup>39</sup> ‘La reoncentre de Gaulle et Adenauer’ *Combat* 13-14 September 1958.



European identity. As de Gaulle and Chancellor Adenauer declared in 1957: ‘In wanting Europe...we fight for peace in liberty.’<sup>40</sup>

The defence of liberty, however, was often discussed in the context of the preservation of French independence in the European Economic Community. While an association with France as defender of European freedom was an aspect of national mentality, European integration seemed, to some, to pose a threat to French freedom. Critics of European integration wanted France to remain ‘free’ to organize herself independently,<sup>41</sup> even describing the Rome Treaties as an assault on ‘...the essential liberties of France....[that was] unrealizable with France as she is, as she lives. It presupposes the dispossession, the humiliation and *enslavement* of the French [emphasis added].’<sup>42</sup> The Minister of Defence, for example, tried to reassure critics of the EEC that in joining the Community, France was not renouncing her ‘freedom’ but rather voluntarily suspending her ‘rights’ to produce nuclear material.<sup>43</sup>

Liberty, and in particular the defence of liberty, consequently remained a resonant aspect of national mentality that reflected both a strong sense of European identity and a preoccupation with preserving national specificity.

## Civilization

Civilization was a prominent aspect of both French specificity and France’s sense of leadership and mission in Europe. As discussed in Chapter Five, in French national mentality, civilization, and in particular the defence of civilization, was a focal point for France’s ‘European identity’, while serving as a marker of French specificity and superiority within Europe. Therefore, while French debates on Europe illustrate a distinct

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<sup>40</sup> “‘En voulant faire l’Europe Unie, nous nous battons pour la paix dans la liberté” *Le Populaire* 11 November 1957.

<sup>41</sup> Cot, *Journal Officiel*, n.5, p.201, 22 January 1957.

<sup>42</sup> Réoyo, *Journal Officiel*, n.78, p.3287, 5 July 1956.



perception of the Continent as a spiritual entity, it should be remembered that in the context of historical experiences of defence, the difference between concepts of *European* and *French* civilization in French mentality was often indistinct.

For example, Europe was conceived as an ideal, a Europe, which ‘just like France’, might not be strong, but still had “‘a geography and a soul!’”<sup>44</sup> For advocates of integration, Europe’s common civilization was a basis for the construction of a European Community within which this civilization would be strengthened and reinvigorated. A comparison with France’s own ‘civilizing’ mission is difficult to avoid:

Founded on a community of ideas and civilization, a united Europe will ensure an unrivaled dissemination of western values. Sorely tried by a succession of wars and eager for peace, Europe, alongside its great allies, will be an incomparable factor in the improvement of international relations and the triumph of justice and law.<sup>45</sup>

In this sense, Europe was perceived as more than the sum of proposed institutions and economic arrangements, but rather as an entity of common interests and similarities. For some it was *only* possible to unite Europe because its constituent states had ‘comparable civilizations’, and it was this comparability that should above all determine the geographical boundaries of the proposed European Economic Community.<sup>46</sup> The role of ideas was consequently central in this perception of the continent, in contrast to the more utilitarian visions of Europe espoused by Britain:

Economic measures, important as they are, are not sufficient to make the unity of nations. What matters most is faith; it is ideas that bring peoples together... It is necessary above all that all the European nations concretely manifest their growing solidarity each day.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Bourguès-Maunoury, *Journal Officiel*, n.80, p.3344, 10 July 1956.

<sup>44</sup> ‘La France médiatrice entre les deux mondes et le destin de l’Allemagne’ *Combat* 18 September 1958.

<sup>45</sup> French Policy in Algeria and the Middle East outlined by Premier Guy Mollet. Interview granted on Nov 29 1956 to M. de Negri, Special Correspondent of Mexican Newspaper, *Excelsior*’ *Speeches and Press Conferences No.82* (Ambassade de France Service de Presse et d’Information, December 1956).

<sup>46</sup> Jacques Vassor, *Journal Officiel*, n.3, p.96, 17 January 1957.

<sup>47</sup> Le Bail, *Journal Officiel*, n.3, p.109, 17 January 1957.



Interestingly, even some critics of supranational institutions expressed their belief that the states of Europe would simply integrate naturally until they encompassed even the neutral states, as the awareness dawned on them ‘....of their historical determination and their geographical position....’<sup>48</sup> Even those who saw a need to help this development along questioned whether the ‘....proliferation of prototype supranational institutions....’ was indeed the right way of building Europe, or whether instead the time had come to ‘....create a European nation.’<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, even advocates of a leading role for the institutions of the Treaties of Rome perceived the EEC as not just a zone of economic cooperation, but as the creation of a “community of interests” such as a “common atomic destiny” that would enable a common European policy to emerge.<sup>50</sup>

At the other end of the spectrum, the perception existed that European integration along the institutional lines implied by the Community would endanger the very civilization that European states had in common. European civilization, in other words, depended upon the individual contributions of European states, but the individuality of the latter seemed threatened by the prospect of a Community favoured by the United States. As one critic exclaimed: ‘We strongly affirm that...each [European nation] has brought its stone to the building of our civilization and that to destroy their personality is to destroy this civilization.’<sup>51</sup>

## Independence

The notion of independence therefore remained distinctly resonant in French mentality and French conceptions of Europe. In the context of the Cold War, European

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<sup>48</sup> ‘La France médiatrice entre les deux mondes et le destin de l’Allemagne’ *Combat* 18 September 1958.

<sup>49</sup> Albert de Bailhencourt, *Journal Officiel*, n.3, p.119, 17 January 1957.

<sup>50</sup> ‘Guy Mollet aux rédacteurs en chef: Les peuples de notre continent sont à l’âge de l’Europe’ *Le Populaire* 15-16 December 1956.

<sup>51</sup> Réoyo, *Journal Officiel*, n.78, p.3287, 5 July 1956.

and French independence were under threat, yet European integration was perceived as both the means and the obstacle to French national independence.

### *Independence through European Integration*

In the mid- to late- 1950s, the presence of the Soviet Union and United States exacerbated the dawning realization that France's post-war status constrained aspirations to national independence. In the wake of Suez, France, '....humiliated by the United Nations...scoffed at in Cairo by a small sniggering master....'<sup>52</sup> was painfully aware of a decreasing influence and independence. For advocates of European integration, the EEC appeared to be the only escape from an inherently unacceptable 'subordination' to '....the bloody masters of the Kremlin or...to the preachers of morality in America.'<sup>53</sup> It was in this context that Europe offered an alternative to 'weakness of isolation' in the shape of a '....unity that creates strength. Europe is not subordination, it is community!'<sup>54</sup>

For advocates of integration, an *independent* Europe was consequently an urgent necessity. Guy Mollet, for example, believed Europe had to be created as a '....great, independent political power capable of making her voice heard.'<sup>55</sup> The possibility of a united Europe acting as a 'Third Force' to mediate between the superpowers was an attractive option for restoring prestige to the continent. In order to fulfill such a function, however, Europe had to be '....a real Europe, that is to say she [must] depend on no one but herself.'<sup>56</sup> *Le Monde* emphasized this perception in 1956, arguing that Europe had to be created (in part through France's conciliatory and imaginative role for which she was 'irreplaceable'), but it would '....not be Europe if she is not able to depend on herself.'<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Teitgen, *Journal Officiel*, n.1, p.10, 15 January 1957.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Guy Mollet, paraphrased in '“En voulant faire l'Europe Unie, nous nous battons pour la paix dans la liberté”' *Le Populaire* 11 November 1957.

<sup>56</sup> 'Une augurée' *Le Monde* 1 January 1957.

<sup>57</sup> 'Une Grande Année Diplomatique' *Le Monde* 1-2 January 1956.



*Europe as a Threat to Independence*

The same ‘national’ preoccupation with independence that prompted a desire for European integration also presented one of the greatest obstacles to realization of the European project. The question of national versus European independence remained a matter of contention – one that was expressed through the imagery of past defence. Euratom in particular generated concerns that France would be unable to develop and maintain an independent nuclear capability, as indispensable to France ‘....as were the canons of Valmy and Marne....’, an eventuality considered unacceptable ‘...from the point of view of national defence, of French independence, of the dignity and morale of the army....’<sup>58</sup> Similarly, one Deputy asked ‘[w]hat, in effect, would have been the morale of an army that had been refused the possibility of gun powder after the battle of Crécy?’<sup>59</sup>

For critics, advocates of the Common Market and Euratom were nothing more than ‘modern Charlemagnes’ who sought to increase their power through an undemocratic and unaccountable monopoly of force that would undermine national independence.<sup>60</sup> Once again the Communists were amongst the most vociferous critics. The Communist party declared itself ‘....resolutely hostile to a project the realization of which would constitute a dangerous threat to peace, a dangerous threat to French independence.’<sup>61</sup> The EDC had already threatened the ‘....independence of France’s national defence’<sup>62</sup> and the new proposals only portended the Europe of Hitler and the France of Pétain.<sup>63</sup> Advocates of European integration were accused of seeking to hide

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<sup>58</sup> Jean Crouzier, *Journal Officiel*, n.78, p.3286, 5 July 1956.

<sup>59</sup> Bourguès-Maunoury, *Journal Officiel*, n.80, p.3343, 10 July 1956.

<sup>60</sup> Réoyo, *Journal Officiel*, n.78, p.3288, 5 July 1956.

<sup>61</sup> Rieu, *Journal Officiel*, n.81, p.3386, 11 July.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> Marie-Claude Vaillant-Couturier, *Journal Officiel*, n.1, p.21, 15 January 1957.

the ‘....reality of their project, which aims to make France disappear as an independent nation.’<sup>64</sup>

The Communists were vociferous in their dismissal of the European Community as an appendage of United States policy that could only be detrimental to French independence. The simple expression of United States support for the Community was a source of antagonism, the ‘....advance blessing of Mr. Dulles’ sufficing to justify its criticism.’<sup>65</sup> More specifically, Euratom was rendered instantly suspicious by the support of the US Secretary of State ‘....whose initiatives do not favour the independence of France.’<sup>66</sup> The Economic Community was consequently only a ‘....submission to the orders of the United States....’<sup>67</sup>

The Papacy joined the United States as a principal player in the Communists’ conspiratorial portrayal of European integration. The Pope’s 1953 directive calling for the speediest possible unification of Europe at all costs was interpreted in 1956 as evidence of the Catholic Church’s desire to give birth to a ‘Vatican Europe’ with no regard for the consequences to France.<sup>68</sup> The Europe proposed by the Rome Treaties in reality only constituted ‘....a little piece of Europe under the patronage of the Pope who...dreams of the reconstitution of a sort of Germanic Holy Roman Empire ....’<sup>69</sup>

Perhaps the greatest Communist animosity towards the EEC was expressed in the context of ‘German hegemony.’ Germany, it was argued, had never been ‘de-Nazified’ and Hitler’s Greater Germany had, after all, been Europe.<sup>70</sup> The Community would

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<sup>64</sup> Jacques Duclos, *Journal Officiel*, n.5, p.230, 22 January 1957.

<sup>65</sup> Pierre Dreyfus-Schmidt, *Journal Officiel*, n.81, p.3380, 11 July 1956.

<sup>66</sup> Kriegel-Valrimont, *Journal Officiel*, n.80, p.3352, 10 July 1956.

<sup>67</sup> Rieu, *Journal Officiel*, n.81, p.3386, 11 July 1956.

<sup>68</sup> Raymond Triboulet, *Journal Officiel*, n.81, p.3387, 11 July 1956.

<sup>69</sup> Vaillant-Coururier, *Journal Officiel*, n.1, p.21, 15 January 1957.

<sup>70</sup> M. Dreyfus-Schmidt, *Journal Officiel*, n.81, p.3382, 11 July 1956.



merely result in French policy being decided in Germany, and in the realization of the Europe sought by William II and Hitler, in which France would be only an appendage.<sup>71</sup>

Thus, even the Communists framed their opposition to European integration in the context of France's independence and grandeur calling instead for a policy '....of social progress, of independence and of national grandeur....'<sup>72</sup> All of these, the Communists argued, would be undermined by a 'Little Europe' in which French policy would '....no longer be decided in Paris, but at the seat of the community, by Germany.'<sup>73</sup>

The Communists were not the only critics of European integration to frame their concerns in relation to French independence. Opinions to the right of the political spectrum also criticized the Euratom agreement, albeit from a more military perspective, as an '....inadmissible renunciation of our right....' which could only result in the '....maintenance of the monopoly of the American-Anglo-Soviet club of the Great atomic powers.'<sup>74</sup> The present environment, which appeared conducive to nuclear disarmament, was not guaranteed to persist, and if disarmament negotiations failed, the renunciation of France's national nuclear program would equate to '....a veritable treason towards the country...an inadmissible act of abandon.'<sup>75</sup> The French military's ability to assure the maintenance of France's 'independence and freedom' had to be preserved,<sup>76</sup> and the European project, which sought to control '....the means of violence, army and policy today, ....power of the atom tomorrow'<sup>77</sup> was clearly against French interests.

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<sup>71</sup> Vaillant-Coururier, *Journal Officiel*, n.1, p.21, 15 January 1957.

<sup>72</sup> Rieu, *Journal Officiel*, n.81, p.3386, 11 July 1956.

<sup>73</sup> Mme Marie-Claude Vaillant-Couturier *Journal Officiel*, n.1, p.21, 16 January 1957.

<sup>74</sup> Pierre André, *Journal Officiel*, n.80, p.3348, 10 July 1956.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> Réoyo, *Journal Officiel*, n.78, pp. 3287-88, 5 July, 1956.

**DEFENCE: A BASIS FOR FRANCE'S EUROPEAN IDENTITY?**

Despite the continued emphasis on national independence, the identification of France with Europe, founded in part on the broader context discussed above, was reinforced by French and European post-war circumstances. The post-war decline in the status and fortunes of France and Europe facilitated identification between the two, and encouraged an imagery of commonality. Defence, a sphere in which French and European interests seemed, at least on the surface, to be intertwined, heavily influenced this imagery.

This more direct influence of defence on French conceptualizations of Europe, and on French identification with Europe, fell into two broad categories: Defence of the European continent, both from external threats and from the consequences of future European wars; and defence of European interests in the face of the superpowers that appeared increasingly dominant.

***In Defence of Europe***

Debates on European integration from the mid- to late- 1950s, underline that the contemporary perception of common threats to European states was a powerful argument for advocates of European integration. It appeared evident to some that national impotence in the face of overwhelming threats required a more unified European response; '....for the countries of Western Europe, their cohesion constitutes the only means of coping with the threats that come from all sides.'<sup>78</sup> Similarly it was argued that '....the old countries of Europe will not resist the storm which threatens them from all parts if they are not able to coordinate their efforts and increase their power and their efficiency through a common policy.'<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Pineau, *Journal Officiel*, n.4 , p.158, 18 January 1957.

<sup>79</sup> Pierre Abelin, *Journal Officiel*, n.2, p.82, 16 January 1957.



Likewise, *Le Monde* expressed its concerns over ‘national’ impotence in 1956:

The grave events of the past months have reinforced the conviction of our government that, to stand up to the threats...in Africa, the Middle East or Eastern Europe, and to meet the economic needs of the hour, it is necessary, more than ever, to realize European unification. Perhaps, for France, it is a matter of life and death. It is at the very least a question of national independence.’<sup>80</sup>

The perception of external and internal threats, and the need to defend against them, consequently highlighted the sense of a common European position. As *Combat* declared in 1958; ‘[e]verywhere there are threats...the Crescent rises in the eastern sky. France and England have some common positions to defend...’<sup>81</sup>

Yet it was not just a matter of common threats to European states engendering the need for a common European defence; remarks on common threats reflected a more specific association between France and Europe, rather than between various European states. For example, the ideological nature of the perceived Soviet and Muslim threats to Europe (and, of course, to France) encouraged the perception that European civilization itself was in need being defended; a function to which France’s traditional vocation was most suited.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs, for instance, asked the National Assembly to vote in favour of the Treaties of Rome in order to associate France with ‘....the great common work on which the prosperity, if not the survival, of our western civilization may depend.’<sup>82</sup> *Le Figaro* also argued for a European integration that included France’s African territories on the basis of the Soviet threat to the West’s ‘civilizing preeminence’. It was well known, argued *Le Figaro*, that there could be no Europe without France, and that the Soviets had consequently selected ‘....France, pillar of this civilization as ...the

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<sup>80</sup> ‘L’Unification est peut-être pour la France une question de vie et de mort...’ *Le Monde* 30-31 December 1956.

<sup>81</sup> ‘La Fin des Isles...’ *Combat* 30 June 1958.

<sup>82</sup> Pineau, *Journal Officiel*, n.4, p.159, 18 January 1957.

target’ by trying to engender the loss of her African territories, knowing that once ‘France [is] defeated, reduced to her metropolitan frontiers, Europe will become easy prey, for communist imperialism and racial fanaticism....’<sup>83</sup>

Moreover, it was argued, the ‘German problem’ – another threat that impacted on French and European security alike – could only be lastingly solved through European integration. The relinquishing of some national sovereignty was consequently essential in order to create a ‘European ensemble’ which, having authority over its member states, would have authority over Germany also.<sup>84</sup> Europe could thus contain the state that was blamed for the outbreak of two global conflicts – conflicts that had nonetheless awoken Europe’s states to the need of ‘creating a unified Europe.’<sup>85</sup>

Echoes of French concerns over national disunity in defence were thus reflected in calls for European unity; a unity that was necessary to avoid both future wars between European states and to ensure defence against external threats.

### *In Defence of European Interests*

Indeed, in addition to posing threats that demanded a coherent European response, the changing post-war environment was also demonstrating the growing impotence of Europe’s states to defend their interests. The still-recent experiences of Suez and Hungary, and ongoing difficulties in the Middle East, had all contributed to an increasing sense of ‘European’ not just ‘national’ weakness, which advocates of the European project believed had to be countered through European integration. As one deputy stated in 1957, the ‘....decline in influence of the divided European nations, their increasing

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<sup>83</sup> ‘Une belle proie: l’Europe’ *Le Figaro* 1 February 1957.

<sup>84</sup> Mollet, *Journal Officiel*, n.81, p.3382, 11 July 1956.

<sup>85</sup> Jacques Vassor, *Journal Officiel* n.3, p.96 17 January 1957.



isolation, are, in fact, the clearest lessons which ensue from the Suez crisis.’<sup>86</sup> Likewise, one deputy declared:

The declining influence of our Europe in international affairs, the isolation of our countries in the face of certain difficulties demonstrate how urgent it is to constitute a new force resting on solid economic institutions.<sup>87</sup>

The perception of Europe’s weakness as a continent, and consequently of *European* interests, was only strengthened by the presence of the superpowers, against whom individual European states had little chance of successfully competing. In 1957, one Deputy even suggested that while the nineteenth century had been the ‘age of nationalities’, the ‘....Twentieth Century is going to open the era of continents, and nothing can disprove that today it is impossible for a country politically and economically isolated in the old Europe to compete with the American and Soviet blocs.’<sup>88</sup>

The prestige and economic well-being of individual European states consequently became more equated with the prestige and prosperity of ‘....our continent in the face of two blocs who tend to divide world affairs between them.’<sup>89</sup> European integration was thus essential to defending Europe’s influence,<sup>90</sup> a Europe that *already* existed by virtue of the common interests and positions being thrown into relief by the presence of common external threats.

The conceptualization Europe was enhanced by the juxtaposition of ‘European’ interests with those of distinctly non-European superpowers. As *Combat* stated, for example, the French and English were on familiar ground when discussing Europe and the Middle East, and the problems that ‘.... disrupt *our corner of the planet*....’ but

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<sup>86</sup> Pierre Courant, *Journal Officiel*, n.3, p.118, 17 January 1957.

<sup>87</sup> Pineau, *Journal Officiel*, n.4, p.158, 18 January 1957.

<sup>88</sup> Albert Lalle, *Journal Officiel*, n.4, p.155, 18 January 1957.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.* See also Faure, *Journal Officiel*, 1957 n.2, p.70, 16 January 1957.

<sup>90</sup> Faure, *Journal Officiel*, n.2, p.70, 16 January 1957.

Americans were in ‘distant lands [emphasis added].’<sup>91</sup> How, then, could European states accept the ‘.... paradoxical situation of being more and more in need of placing ourselves under American protection, while risking finding the United States against us in the defence of interests that we deem vital?’<sup>92</sup>

## CONCLUSION

French conceptualizations of European identity paralleled many of the aspects evident in its own mentality. Europe was endowed with grandeur, assigned a mission, identified with civilization, and encouraged to recover its independence. Europe, perceived through the French mirror, was a unitary entity, an ‘ideal’, but one that sprang from France and reflected France and French values.

Indeed, French identity was closely bound to the concept of leadership and primacy in Europe, a concept with roots in France’s historical defensive missions. From very early on, as discussed in Chapter Five, a fundamental element of French grandeur had been the sense of France’s mission as defender of the Church, a mission later reinforced by the significance attached to the coronation of Charlemagne as Roman Emperor in French historiography.

The intersection of liberty and Christianity in western civilization gave France’s defensive missions a European dimension that entrenched the notion of French superiority within Europe. Little coincidence that in the wake of French failure in defence in the Second World War, de Gaulle sought to revive French grandeur in part by associating modern France with the legendary Charlemagne.<sup>93</sup>

In the 1950s, the question of European integration was thus a problematic one. The Europe of French historiography was not the Europe of the EEC, within which

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<sup>91</sup> ‘La Fin des Isles...’ *Combat* 30 June 1958.

<sup>92</sup> Le Bail, *Journal Officiel*, n.2, p.107, 17 January 1957.



French grandeur and independence risked being limited, not amplified. The requirements of defence nevertheless provided additional impetus for European integration.

Consequently, while in 1954 France had rejected proposals for a European Defence Community, by 1957 the strategic landscape, marked by Suez and Hungary, had rendered the concept of integration somewhat more acceptable.

The reader might at this stage remark that the EEC was acceptable to France because it emphasized integration in the economic, rather than defensive sphere. The pertinence of defence in the debates outlined above, however, suggests that the defensive dimension of the European project remained prominent in French mentality.

The following three chapters address the impact of defence on national and European identity in Italy; a country whose ‘specificity’ and ‘greatness’, in contrast to France, have not traditionally been tied to defence.

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<sup>93</sup> ‘Charlemagne to de Gaulle’ *Christian Science Monitor*, 17 September 1958.

# CHAPTER EIGHT – ITALY: CONSTRUCTION, DECONSTRUCTION, RECONSTRUCTION

## DEFENCE AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF ITALIAN NATIONAL MENTALITY

### INTRODUCTION

In contrast to Britain and France, a relationship between defence and national identity in Italy is not easily discerned. Italy has been described as lacking ‘....a strong and independent military tradition....’; a factor exacerbated by reaction to the consequences of Mussolini’s pursuit of Italian greatness through military means.<sup>1</sup> Derogatory, anecdotal stereotypes of Italians and the Italian military abound: Italian tanks have ‘rear-facing machine guns’; Italian conscripts are reluctant and recalcitrant; Italians in war are fickle and show little backbone, ready to switch sides at the first sign of adversity.

Nevertheless, aspects of Italian specificity are not dissimilar from those manifested in Britain and France: Greatness and superiority, a preoccupation with independence, an association with liberty and civilization and a sense of national mission. These elements combine to form the framework of a tangible, cultural national identity in Italy, but one whose cohesiveness and political durability have been questioned.

This chapter examines the relationship between defence and the construction of Italian national identity. What impact, if any, has defence exerted in constructing the ‘specificity’ of Italian national identity? Did defensive experiences in Italy prevent, or delay the development of a coherent national identity? Did such experiences influence the conceptualization of Italian identity along cultural, rather than political lines?

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<sup>1</sup> Filippo Andreatta and Christopher Hill, ‘Italy’ in Joylon Howorth and Anand Menon (eds.), The European Union and National Defence Policy (London; New York: Routledge, 1997).



## Considerations

Examining these questions in relation to the origins of Italian identity is a process complicated by lack of clarity. Firstly, it is difficult to clearly distinguish where Roman identity ended and Italian identity began.<sup>2</sup> Even the notion of Italy's geographical limits has varied from ancient Rome through the Middle Ages.<sup>3</sup> Secondly, while establishing exactly *when* English or French identities became realities is complex, the origins of Italian identity are further obscured by the absence of a single Italian state before creation of the Kingdom of Italy in 1861. Until then, Italy had always been incorporated into a larger entity (the Roman and later Holy Roman empires), divided into smaller entities (the city states of feudal and Renaissance Italy) or subjected to rule by foreign powers (including France, Austria and Spain).<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, a sense of 'Italianness'<sup>5</sup> existed before 1861, conceptualized in, and preserved through, the works of Italian cultural elites and founded in large part on the myths of greatness born in ancient Rome. This chapter therefore assesses the relationship between defence and traits and characteristics that were gradually constructed into myths of Italian national identity, even though the roots of these traits and characteristics pre-date the construction of a unitary Italian state.

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<sup>2</sup> For an in-depth analysis of the relationship between Italian and Roman identity in ancient Rome, see Andrea Giardina, *L'Italia Romana: Storie di un'Identità Incompiuta* (Roma: Edizioni Laterza, 1997). Interestingly, Giardina argues that the military experiences shared by various *Italic* peoples strengthened a sense of common *Italic* culture and ethnicity. See Giardina, p.48.

<sup>3</sup> Italy and the Italian peninsula did not become synonymous until at least the time of Dante. See Vincenzo Ilardi's term 'Italianità' in 'Italianità Among Some Italian Intellectuals in the Early Sixteenth Century' *Tradito – Studies in Ancient & Modern History Thought and Religion* (12) (1956), p.342.

<sup>4</sup> See Paolo Brezzi, *La "Questione Romana" nel Risorgimento Italiano* (Rome, Elia, 1970), p.4.

<sup>5</sup> This expression is derived from Ilardi's term 'Italianità' in 'Italianità'.

## ASPECTS OF ITALIAN MENTALITY AND THE IMPACT OF DEFENCE

### Greatness

#### *Defending Roman Greatness*

It is difficult to separate any conception of Italian greatness from the imagery of Roman greatness. As a comprehensive examination of the origins of Roman imagery lies beyond the scope of the thesis,<sup>6</sup> it must suffice to comment here that the secular and spiritual legacies of Rome were foundation stones for the construction of myths of Italian greatness.<sup>7</sup>

Nevertheless, four principal observations should be made with respect to the impact of defence on myths of Roman greatness and specificity. Firstly, and most obviously, defence was as important to preserving the greatness of the Roman Empire as conquest was to creating it. This is well encapsulated by the example of the *lines* – the defensive cordon that encircled the Roman Empire, and protected it against invasion. More significantly, the defensive *lines* also aided the conceptualization of the Roman Empire, functioning as ‘....above all, a marker which left no one in doubt as to which lands were subject to Roman jurisdiction and which were not.’<sup>8</sup> Defence, in other words, preserved the Roman Empire, but also helped enhance its tangibility.

Secondly, and consequentially, the greatness of the Roman Empire was reduced to the historical plane because, whatever the causes of its internal decay, Rome was ultimately unable to defend itself against the Germanic invasions of the Third and Fourth Centuries.

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<sup>6</sup> For an analysis of Roman identity see Giardina; Erich S. Gruen, *Culture and National Identity in Republican Rome* (London: Duckworth, 1993); Walter Nicgorski, ‘Nationalism and Transnationalism in Cicero’ *History of European Ideas* 16 (4-6) (1993), pp.785-791.

<sup>7</sup>For an example of the role of Rome in Medieval Italian historiography, see Åsa Boholm, ‘Reinvented Histories: Medieval Rome as Memorial Landscape’ *Ecumene* 4 (3) (1997).

<sup>8</sup> Davies, *History*, p.185 & p.188.



Thirdly, and more interestingly, this failure in defence has been associated with the belittling of military values in late-antiquity Rome, which, it is argued, led to a decline in the social prestige of warriors, facilitating the victory of poorer and less equipped Germanic tribes.<sup>9</sup> What is significant is not only that a disassociation of greatness from military virtue may have contributed to defeat, but also that part of the myth of Roman greatness that Italy assumed was founded on such a disassociation.

Fourthly, the fall of Rome has been partly attributed to the gradual relinquishing of the responsibilities of defence by the Romans to the Visigoths, who in 382 assumed the task of defending the Danube line against other tribes in exchange for the right to settle on the Roman side of the Danube.<sup>10</sup> The delegation of defence to non-Roman tribes has been described as the ‘.... start of the dismemberment of the empire....’<sup>11</sup> suggesting an association between self-reliance in defence and successful preservation.

The inability of Rome to defend herself had distinct contemporary consequences. More strikingly, however, Rome’s failure in defence held implications for Italian intellectuals writing centuries later. In the Sixteenth Century, for example, Imperial Rome’s dependence on foreigners for defence was interpreted as a surrender of national greatness, and the consequences of this dependence perceived as evidence of the intimate relationship between defence, security and national greatness and virtue.<sup>12</sup>

Similarly, the inability of Rome to defend herself against barbarian onslaughts was perceived by Italian intellectuals of the Nineteenth Century as the product of a root flaw in the Italian nation, a flaw that had impeded Italy’s progress in the world and had to

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<sup>9</sup> Gress, *NATO*, p.158.

<sup>10</sup> In 382, as a result of the Gothic Treaty signed by the Roman government, Visigoths were permitted to settle on the Roman side of the Danube, and assigned the task of defending the Danube line against attack from other invading tribes. See Gress, p.158.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Gress, pp.159-160. *Virtù* encapsulates greatness and virtue.

be rectified.<sup>13</sup> Failure in defence, in other words, appeared to contradict the perceived validity and greatness of the Italian nation; one means to rationalize this apparent contradiction was to attribute failure to an adjustable flaw. Defence, therefore, or rather failure in defence, had an impact not just on the construction of the myth of Roman greatness, but also on how the Italian nation would be conceptualized by latter-day Italians.

Ironically, it could be argued that the resonance of myths of Roman greatness might have declined without Charlemagne's invasion of Italy in 774. In conjunction with the Papacy, Charlemagne 'liberated' Italy from 'barbaric' Longobard rule, restoring Rome to prominence and greatness as the seat of Christianity and civilization.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, while Charlemagne's coronation in Rome in 800 came to symbolize the restoration of the primacy of the Church and Rome, neither Rome nor Italy gained independence but rather were subsumed into another Roman Empire. Of perhaps even greater significance to the course of Italian identity, while the Church and Rome would occupy center stage in much Italian historiography (see below), the liberation that restored their primacy and greatness was achieved at foreign hands. Unlike France, where Charlemagne and the Franks could be co-opted into a traditional French mission in defence of the Church, Italy could not stake ownership to the defence of Christianity. Italy was the *object* of defence, not the *actor*.

### ***Defence and Cultural Greatness in the City States***

From the mid-eleventh century, Imperial rule in Italy was in decline. Instead of being encapsulated in an overarching entity, Italian greatness increasingly began to

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<sup>13</sup> See Emilio Gentile Grande Italia: Ascesa e Declino del Mito della Nazione nel Ventesimo Secolo (Milan: Mondadori, 1997), p.41.



express itself in the form of the independent city-states that started to emerge in Italy from the Tenth Century. It could be argued that the ability of these city-states to defend their independence against one-another's ambitions prevented their amalgamation into a unified Italian state,<sup>15</sup> ensuring that any conceptualization of *national* Italian greatness could only be perceived on a cultural, rather than political, basis.

Nonetheless, a cultural conceptualization of Italian greatness was reinforced in the context of defence against foreign invasions. Perhaps most profoundly, the series of French invasions in Italy (1494 to 1559) had a definite impact on the conception of Italy in intellectual thought. During the first half of the Sixteenth Century, the

.... manifestations of that gradual awareness of belonging to a common historical and cultural group, which had been felt by some Italians particularly since the time of Dante and Petrarch... became more widespread, *and assumed new connotations under the impact of foreign invasions* [emphasis added].<sup>16</sup>

The French invasions even inspired a feeling of 'Italianness' in Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527), the author of *The Prince* so renown for his attachment to the city-state of Florence. In the last chapter of *The Prince*, entitled 'An Exhortation to Liberate Italy from The Barbarians,' Machiavelli draws parallels between Italy's 'enslavement' and the plight of Hebrews, Persians and Athenians, peoples whose trials were necessary in order for their *greatness* to be realized.<sup>17</sup> Machiavelli explicitly linked defence to the recovery of Italian greatness. Firstly, Machiavelli perceived a relationship between Romans relinquishing the responsibilities of defence to foreigners and the decline of Roman greatness:

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<sup>14</sup> Stefano Gasparri, *Prima della Nazioni: Popoli, Etnie e Regni fra Antichità e Medioevo* (Roma: Carocci editore, 1998), pp.134-135.

<sup>15</sup> Davies, *Europe*, p.61.

<sup>16</sup> Ilardi, 'Italianita', pp.339-340. For a discussion of the influence of the French invasions on Italian intellectual thought see Ilardi 'Italianita', pp.345-367

<sup>17</sup> Nicolo Machiavelli, *The Prince* (Hertforshire: Wordsworth Editions Ltd, 1993), pp.205-206. See also Ilardi 'Italianita', p.358.



And if the first disaster to the Roman Empire should be examined, it will be found to have commenced only with the enlisting of the Goths; because from that time the vigour of the Roman Empire began to decline, and all that valour which had raised it passed away to others.’<sup>18</sup>

Secondly, Machiavelli appealed to his ‘Prince’ to found a military force drawn not from mercenaries but from his own people, for ‘*defence against foreigners*’ to prove that Rome’s ancient valour and military virtue lived on in contemporary Italians [emphasis added].<sup>19</sup> According to one interpretation, Machiavelli was ‘....one of the first to advocate the use of this home army as a means of reviving *virtù* among the Italians, and of liberating Italy from the invaders.’<sup>20</sup>

Despite the impact of defence on philosophical conceptualizations of Italian specificity and greatness, the realities of defence failed to confirm the notion that Italian greatness was destined to manifest itself in any politically unified sense. Two specific events had a profoundly negative effect on the development of Italian identity and national mentality; the Battle of Fornovo and the sacking of Rome.

### *Fornovo*

The battle of Fornovo between French and Italian forces in 1495 has been described as ‘....the tuning point in Italian history.’<sup>21</sup> According to the historian Luigi Barzini, the Italian battle plans were ingenious, but a poorly trained and quickly assembled army, confounded by problems of torrential rain and a narrow escape by the French King from capture, culminated in victory for France.<sup>22</sup> Barzini writes that the

.... distant consequences of the defeat are still felt today. If the Italians had won, they would probably have discovered then the pride of being a united people, the self-confidence born of defending their common liberty and independence. Italy would have emerged as a reasonably respected nation, capable of determining her own future... The Italian national character would

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<sup>18</sup> Machiavelli, p.107. See also Gress, pp.159-160.

<sup>19</sup> Machiavelli, , p.210.

<sup>20</sup> Ilardi, ‘Italianità’, p.359.

<sup>21</sup> Luigi Barzini, *The Italians* (London: Penguin, 1968), p.314.

<sup>22</sup> Barzini, pp.311-318.



have developed along different lines. The voices of patriots would not have been mocked but respectfully heeded. When unity and independence finally came in the nineteenth century, the old habits were set.<sup>23</sup>

Failure in defence at Fornovo undermined the confirmation of myths of Italian greatness, or at least of national greatness based on a unified state. According to some, Barzini included, this crushing military defeat destroyed any aspirations to political or military superiority, and encouraged the pursuit of Italian cultural greatness instead.<sup>24</sup>

### *The Sacking of Rome*

Even greatness in cultural fields could be undermined by failure in defence. The French sacking of Rome (1527) has been described as having ‘....no exact parallel as an example of national humiliation.’<sup>25</sup> The Italians were unable to defend the city that, in a divided country, most represented Italy’s cultural and spiritual greatness:

To see their sacred city being defiled, as the Italians did, without being able to lift a finger to avert its doom, was more than a proof of their military and political impotence: it was the betrayal of their moral and spiritual inheritance. The destruction of the city, like the destruction of Jerusalem, *was taken to be a clear sign of the wrath of God in retribution for the vices and the sins of the people. It destroyed their soul. It weakened irremediably their pride and their will to live as one nation, because Rome, like Jerusalem, was also the symbol of their national existence.* Italians had not achieved unity, but had always felt themselves to be a nation nevertheless formed, not like others, by kings, soldiers and statesmen, but by churchmen, poets, artists and philosophers...[emphasis added]<sup>26</sup>

Failure in defence undermined claims for national unity by seeming to cast the hand of providence against the realization of an Italian nation. Moreover, the inability to defend Rome, center of culture and spirituality, undermined the cultural and spiritual foundations of an apolitical Italian national identity.

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<sup>23</sup> Barzini, pp.314-315.

<sup>24</sup> Gregory Hanlon, ‘The Decline of a Provincial Military Aristocracy: Siena 1560-1740’ *Past and Present* (155 (May 1997), p.64.

<sup>25</sup> Barzini, p.322.

<sup>26</sup> Barzini, p.323.



However, while Italy's failures in defence eroded confidence in Italy as a political and even cultural nation, defeat also prompted the belief in some quarters that Italy needed to unify in order to gain her independence, a necessary condition for the fulfillment of Italian greatness. For example, toward the late Sixteenth Century, lack of unity in Italy was being decried as the reason for its dwindling status, prompting calls from elites for Italians to cooperate in the formation of strong military forces to defend Italy so that her arts and commerce (sources of cultural greatness) could expand throughout the country.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, in the context of French and Austrian domination, the myth of Italian greatness was heavily influenced by Vincenzo Gioberti and Giuseppe Mazzini, who wrote of Italy's *Primato*, or primacy, which defined Italy on the basis of a legacy of cultural genius and civilization.<sup>28</sup>

Foreign invasions therefore contributed to elite conceptualizations of Italian specificity based on cultural greatness and superiority. In some respects, failure in defence against invasions undermined notions of political and military greatness and reaffirmed the notion that Italian greatness should be pursued on cultural bases. Paradoxically, failures in defence also reinforced the view in some quarters that Italy needed to unify politically in order to achieve the independence that would allow her cultural greatness to be fully realized.

## **Independence**

Defence against foreign oppression was thus closely linked to the question of independence, which in turn was bound to greatness. The relationship between defence, independence and greatness probably reached its zenith with the Risorgimento, the Nineteenth Century cultural and nationalist movement that led to Italian unification. The

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<sup>27</sup> See Emiliana P. Noether, 'The Intellectual Dimension of Italian Nationalism: An Overview', *History of European Ideas* [C.1989], pp.779-780.



notion of greatness has been described as ‘....the animator of all the Risorgimento, in terms of a will to re-vindicate national dignity and affirm the right of Italians to equality with the other free peoples of Europe....[emphasis added].’<sup>29</sup> Escape from foreign domination was a central theme, and defence was again an instrumental context.

For example, from approximately 1822 to 1850, Austrian domination in Italy was paralleled to the ‘barbaric’ Longobard rule in Italy (568-774), Italians being cast in the role of the oppressed *Italic* tribes, and the occupying Hapsburgs as Longobards.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, amidst oppressive Austrian rule, the Twelfth Century struggle of the Lombard League states against the domination of Emperor Frederick I (‘Barbarossa’) was portrayed as Italy’s first struggle for liberation from Austrian oppression.<sup>31</sup> The Germans of the Twelfth Century and the Austrians of the Nineteenth were in essence presented as synonymous.<sup>32</sup> Defence against foreign rule provided not only the impetus, but also the imagery, for appeals to liberation and independence.

Likewise, Emperor Francis of Austria’s declaration to the Lombards that they must forget they were Italian because they belonged to him *by right of conquest* served only to regenerate the idea of Italy as a nation.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Procacci, p.292.

<sup>29</sup> Rosano Romeo, *L’Italia Unita e la Prima Guerra Mondiale* (Rome; Bari: Laterza, 1978), p.175.

<sup>30</sup> For a discussion of the role of the Longobard invasion of Italy in Risorgimento historiography see Benedetto Croce, *Storia della Storiografia Italiana nel Secolo Decimonono* (Bari: 1964), pp.96-158; Stefano Gasparri, pp.-137.

<sup>31</sup> The Lombard League (which had established common war funds, and constructed a fortress to protect itself) had been successful in forcing Frederick to concede some political privileges and constitutional recognition to them, but had not sought a separate and unified existence outside the Holy Roman Empire as its primary goal. A new *Lega Lombarda* or ‘Northern League’ gained prominence in Italy in the late 1980s, laying claim to the original League’s iconography. Ironically, the modern League stands for separatism in Italy rather than unity. See Edward Coleman, ‘Italy’s First Northern League?’ *History Today* 46, 10 (October 1990), p.8.

<sup>32</sup> Among intellectuals and cultural figures of the period who espoused Italian independence and patriotism through poetry, prose and music were Massimo D’Azeglio, Alessandro Manzoni, Giovanni Berchet, and Giuseppe Verdi. For further discussion on historiography of the Risorgimento see Brezzi, p.7 & Pietro Orsi, *Come Fu Fatta l’Italia, Conferenze Popolari Sulla Storia del Nostro Risorgimento* 3rd ed (Turin: Società Pipografico-Editrice Nazionale, 1914), pp.53-71.

<sup>33</sup> Orsi, p.14.



Nevertheless, Italy's past failures in defence continued to compel some Risorgimento intellectuals to seek an explanation for Italy's defeats in a fundamental weakness of the 'national character.' In 1869, for instance, Francesco de Sanctis, philosopher, professor and politician, asked how Italy could have been in such a state of licentiousness and corruption that at the first clash with the 'barbarians' she had lost everything and 'disappeared from history'; a fall from which he doubted Italy had fully recovered.<sup>34</sup>

Thus, while failure in defence cast doubt on the right and destiny of Italians to exist as a nation, the foreign domination that ensued served to awaken (or reawaken) Italians to the idea of their own nationality. The intelligentsia was inspired to manifest *Italian* identity in opposition to a *foreign* government, facilitating the dissemination of the conceptualization of Italy to a broader (albeit still elite) cultured bourgeoisie.<sup>35</sup> At the very least, regardless of *how* it was conceived, the idea of Italy was being discussed in the context of defence and liberation.<sup>36</sup>

## Freedom

By the Nineteenth Century, Italy had been subjected to long periods of foreign rule during which the practical idea of independence had been imbued with the symbolism of national 'freedom.' Interestingly, it was lack of independence under French domination that helped entrench the notion of freedom – both in terms of the individual and the state – as an Italian national value. In the Nineteenth Century, French rule exposed Italy to the principles of the French Revolution and Napoleonic Law –

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<sup>34</sup> Gentile, p.41.

<sup>35</sup> Orsi, p.65.

<sup>36</sup> Orsi, p.71.



national sovereignty and the freedom and equality of all men before the law.<sup>37</sup> At the same time, foreign rule served to inspire the desire to realize this freedom for Italy.

During Austrian rule in the Nineteenth Century, the persecution of Italian liberals and patriots reinforced the ideological value of, and connection to, freedom. During the Italian Risorgimento, the denial of freedom by foreign oppression was consequently entwined with the struggle for liberation.<sup>38</sup> For example, the desire for liberation was influential in Giuseppe Mazzini's writings on Italy. For Mazzini, Italian unity, liberty and independence were interlinked, and liberation from the 'barbarians' was essential to their attainment.<sup>39</sup>

Freedom, however, also formed a more theoretical, abstract, part of the elite conception of Italian identity, but one that nonetheless was entwined with liberation. In some of the most eloquent discourse on nationality to emerge from the Risorgimento, the idea of the nation as a predominantly *voluntarist* entity was dominant. By virtue of this voluntarist principle, there were no inherent boundaries in the conception of the nation, membership of which was determined by individual choice. A conscious love for, and devotion to, the *Patria* (an expression which in Italian has far greater connotations of national attachment than the unemotional and un-evocative "homeland") could not be instilled by force, and could only be willingly felt and given. If Italians were to develop this national attachment they had to above all else be free; in Italy this freedom was dependent on liberation from foreign rule.<sup>40</sup>

This perspective was most vividly espoused by Mazzini, who argued that not only could Italy flourish through independence, but also that the nation itself had to be

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<sup>37</sup> See Brezzi, pp. 5-6.

<sup>38</sup> Orsi, pp. 39-43. For an example of this relationship between freedom and defence against foreign rule see the song written by Giovanni Berchet in the 1830s, reproduced in Orsi, p.47.

<sup>39</sup> Orsi, pp.53-56.



emancipated for national consciousness to be raised. From a theoretical perspective of the nation, freedom (both internal and external) was perceived as essential to the realization of the nation, and by extension, as essential to the realization of the *Italian* nation.<sup>41</sup>

The Great War bolstered the national idea through the notion of sacrifice in defence of ‘national’ values, among them freedom;<sup>42</sup> in relation to sacrifice, freedom itself became more entrenched in Italian mentality.<sup>43</sup> Shared experiences of combat and sacrifice involved the masses who had been previously isolated and uninvolved from the idea of the nation.<sup>44</sup> It has been argued that during the First World War (despite setbacks like Caporetto, where the Italian forces fled before the enemy), ‘...the Italian people gave the greatest proof of civil cohesion in all of their history.’<sup>45</sup>

### Civilization

Freedom was essential not just to the realization of the unity of the Italian nation and the development of a national attachment to the *Patria*, but also because it became increasingly and intrinsically linked to another aspect of the emerging Italian nation; civilization.

As discussed above, the emphasis on Italy as a cultural and civilized entity sprang in part from past failures in defence, which had undermined confidence in a unified Italy and in military values as a foundation for Italian greatness. It should therefore be

<sup>40</sup> See, particularly, Federico Chabod *L’Idea di Nazione* 10th edition (Rome; Bari: Laterza, 1998), pp.34-35 and Gentile, pp.23-27

<sup>41</sup> For an amplification of Mazzini’s perception of voluntarism, emancipation and the nation see J.A.R. Marriott *The Makers of Modern Italy – Mazzini, Cavour, Garibaldi: Three Lectures Delivered at Oxford* (London; New York: Macmillan & Co, 1889), particularly pages 13-16. For a more general selection of Mazzini’s work see Charles William Stubbs ‘God and the People’: *The Religious Creed of a Democrat Being Selections from the Writings of Joseph Mazzini* (London: T.Fisher & Unwin, 1896).

<sup>42</sup> See Carlo Sforza *Contemporary Italy: Its Intellectual and Moral Origins* trs. Drake and Denise DeKay, (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., inc., 1946), p.58.

<sup>43</sup> Romeo, p.160.

<sup>44</sup> See Romeo, p.154.



unsurprising that during the Risorgimento, cultural media played a particularly significant part in disseminating the conceptualization of the Italian nation.

Modern civilization, it was argued, was the natural product of reason, freedom, and the moral and intellectual emancipation of man; liberty was thus the essence of civilization, and civilization was an essential aspect of the nation. A part of this civilization was Italy's heritage of cultural and artistic genius and history, portrayed as a national continuity that belied Italy's long history as a fragmented, rather than cohesive, entity. Mazzini's writings, for example, are littered with references to ancient Rome, while he also espouses the notion of continuity in Italian cultural and artistic thought on the nation in his perceptions of Dante, whom he describes as “....the prophet of the nationality of Italy.”<sup>46</sup> (For the historian Giuliano Procacci, however, Dante's vision of Italy must remain firmly in the context of the poet's ‘....idea of a restoration of the Empire's universal monarchy.’)<sup>47</sup>

Poetry, literature, historical novels and plays containing ‘appeals’ to the Italian people were common in Risorgimento Italy, as were publications like *Antologia* and *Archivio Storico Italiano*, which contributed to creating ‘....a shared national interest...unity was finally achieved by a mixture of political negotiations and military campaigns, but intellectuals provided ideological inspiration.’<sup>48</sup> Not only was cultural genius portrayed as an aspect of Italy's identity; culture itself was perceived and employed as a medium to transmit the national idea.<sup>49</sup> Even after unification, Gabriele

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<sup>45</sup> Romeo, p.155.

<sup>46</sup> Mazzini cited in Stubbs, p.169.

<sup>47</sup> Giovanni Procacci, *History of the Italian People* tr. Anthony Paul (London: Penguin, 1988), p.61.

<sup>48</sup> Noether, ‘Overview’, p.780.

<sup>49</sup> For example, in 1861 a National Exhibition was held specifically to represent the idea of the glory and strength of the Italian nation. See Giorgio Fabre, ‘The Ideology of Progress’ in Carlo Pirovano (ed.), *Modern Italy: Images and History of a National Identity, Vol. I: From Unification to the New Century* (Milan: Electa, 1982), p.71. Similarly, the building of new monuments and restoration of old ones increased during the Risorgimento, particularly in Rome and Milan, where they were intended to symbolize



D'Annunzio (1863-1938) wrote in the mid-1890s of the artist's potential as '....the shaper of the whole community's consciousness.'<sup>50</sup>

This emphasis on Italian civilization was spurred in part by the disassociation of Italian greatness from military virtues. Nonetheless, civilization was reinforced as an Italian characteristic in the context of the First World War, particularly in relation to the defence of Latin civilization from Germanic influences.<sup>51</sup> German science and culture, which since the Risorgimento had become accepted and admired by Italian intellectuals, were now disparaged in a '....true crusade against the Germanic ...in the press and in intellectual circles....'<sup>52</sup> that portrayed 'vile, ignoble Germans' from which Italy's 'virgins and brides' had to be defended.<sup>53</sup> The 'barbaric' Germans were threatening to impose their science, laws and customs on modern civilization in Europe, and Italy's place at the heart of Europe's civilization gave her a singular interest in, and obligation towards, the defence of Rome's heritage.<sup>54</sup>

### Mission

Risorgimento myths of greatness, independence, freedom and civilization were combined in a myth of mission that enhanced the conceptualization of Italian specificity. In 1843, for example, Vincenzo Gioberti produced his famous *Sul Primato Morale a Civile degli Italiani* in which he presented the primacy of the Italian nation in terms of the role of its civilizing influence on the world.<sup>55</sup> For Gioberti, Italy's position as the seat of the Papacy had for centuries justified Italy's superiority, or primacy, among nations, a

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the nation's common history and shared high culture. See Armengo Restucci, 'Urban Regeneration' in Pirovano (ed.), *Modern Italy: Vol. I*, pp.206-209.

<sup>50</sup> Jared M. Becker, 'D' Annunzio's "Imaginifico": Language and Nationalism in post-Risorgimento Italy' *History of European Ideas* 16 (1-3) (1993), p.178.

<sup>51</sup> See Romeo, pp.110-111, and pp. 130-132.

<sup>52</sup> Romeo, p.131.

<sup>53</sup> See Giovanni de Luna, 'The War' in Pirovano (ed.), *Modern Italy Vol. I*, pp.179-181.

<sup>54</sup> P. Fedele, *Perché Siamo Entrati in Guerra* (Rome, 1915), pp.29-30.

<sup>55</sup> Procacci, p.292.



primacy that would return if the Church were restored to its ‘universal function.’<sup>56</sup> Italy, Gioberti proclaimed, was second to none in creative abilities, its national genius being entwined with the ‘Catholic principle’:

The civilization of other peoples derives from Catholicism and from Italy. Italy is the creative nation. Its inventive genius and sublimity of its works. Italy, the nation that redeems other peoples, ...cannot be redeemed by their works.<sup>57</sup>

Mazzini also believed in national mission, declaring that nationality was the factor that assigned peoples their role in the world, or more precisely, which constituted “...their mission upon earth – that is to say, their individuality.”<sup>58</sup> Addressing Italians directly in his writing, Mazzini proclaimed that “As individuals and as a nation you have a mission given you by God.”<sup>59</sup> For Mazzini, Italy’s national mission was a ‘....special civilizing mission to Europe and the world.’<sup>60</sup> Mazzini chastised the French for believing they were the only nation with a mission in Europe, arguing that the ‘torch’ had passed to Italy.<sup>61</sup> Indeed, when Mazzini wrote of *Giovine Italia* he wrote of *Giovine Europa* also.<sup>62</sup>

The First World War seemed to confirm the European dimension of Italy’s national mission. The ‘European’ vocation, espoused in theory by Mazzini, was part of the rhetoric of Italian participation in the war, and Italy was portrayed as ‘saving’ Europe from the threatened hegemony of Germanic civilization.<sup>63</sup> As such, the First World War was characterized as ‘....a profound test of greatness.’<sup>64</sup> After the war, an implicit case

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<sup>56</sup> Procacci, p.292.

<sup>57</sup> Vincenzo Gioberti in Derek Beales, The Risorgimento and the Unification of Italy (London; New York, 1971), p.132.

<sup>58</sup> Mazzini in Stubbs, p.6.

<sup>59</sup> Giuseppe Mazzini in Sforza, p.58.

<sup>60</sup> Beales, pp.54-55.

<sup>61</sup> See Stubbs, pp. 60 & 61.

<sup>62</sup> For a selection of writings on Mazzini and Europe see Salvo Mastellone (ed.), Giuseppe Mazzini: Pensieri Sulla Democrazia in Europa (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1997).

<sup>63</sup> See, for instance, Fedele, pp.29-30.

<sup>64</sup> See Gentile, p.115.



was made for Italy to take the lead in a Europe that needed to come once again under the ‘....guiding hand and authority of the older, more mature, more contemplative peoples.’<sup>65</sup>

It is interesting to note that justifying participation in the First World War on the grounds of freedom and civilization also enabled Italian identity to assume a less passive dimension. Italy could now be portrayed as the defender of the civilization she had for centuries represented, but whose defence had often been the preserve of foreign powers.

## Summary

By the First World War, a sense of Italian specificity founded on greatness, mission, freedom and civilization existed. It would, however, be fair to argue that at the end of the Nineteenth Century, a sense of being ‘Italian’ was still largely restricted to Italian elite intellectuals, and had not permeated the national consciousness of the masses. While Massimo D’Azeglio (prime minister of the Kingdom of Sardinia after Italian unification) is linked to the famous phrase ‘we have made Italy, now we must make the Italians’, it might be more appropriate to note the comment of Ferdinando Martini, a former Secretary of Education, who, in 1896, declared that while Italy had been made, “...unfortunately *we have not made* the Italians [emphasis added].”<sup>66</sup> Despite the introduction of more standardized schooling, the circulation of newspapers and periodicals carrying ‘national ideas’ and the creation of a national military, widespread illiteracy<sup>67</sup> had limited the dissemination of national consciousness to a population that still broadly perceived the *Patria* as something foreign to their accepted way of life.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> G. Ferrero, *La Guerra Europea* (Milan, 1915), p.95.

<sup>66</sup> Alon Confino, ‘Review Article Simonetta Soldani and Gabriele Turi (eds) “Making Italians School and Culture in Modern Italy, Vol. I: The Birth of the Nation State, Vol. II, A Mass Society”’ (Bologna: Il Mulino Bianco, 1993)” *Social History* (22 May 1997), p.194.

<sup>67</sup> According to Confino, three quarters of Italians over five were illiterate at the time of Italian unification in 1861, and most Italians spoke regional dialects rather than standardized Italian. See Confino ‘Review Article’, p.197. For an interesting 1868 treatise on the problems of diffusing the Italian language see Raffaello Lambruschini ‘Dell’Unità della Lingua e Dei Mezzi di Difonderla: Relazione al Minsitro della



Two principal arguments should be considered. Firstly, unification was achieved with foreign aid and limited personal sacrifices, inhibiting the development of a nation bonded by a common defence, sacrifice, and ultimately triumph.<sup>69</sup> Secondly, the myths upon which Italy's identity were founded were simply too great for unified Italy to live up to.<sup>70</sup> Economically and politically, Italy still was not counted a 'great power.' Disillusion with the Italian idea had ensued, even among those who had most ardently supported unification.<sup>71</sup> In the words of Count Carlo Sforza, Italy '....for a while seemed like a thoroughbred that wins the race, but falls exhausted even while the onlookers' plaudits are greeting his arrival at the post.'<sup>72</sup> Italy, in other words "....appeared too small for its great history."<sup>73</sup>

It may well be that this all too apparent contradiction between myth and reality undermined Italian identity at a crucial stage, hindering the dissemination of the national idea to the masses. In any event, by the early Twentieth Century, an Italian identity constructed on cultural greatness and ideological commitments to freedom appeared frail and lack-luster.

Ironically, while the author would argue Italian identity had seemed strongest in the midst of the *defensive* context of the First World War, Italian leaders of the early Twentieth Century sought instead to construct a more vigorous Italian national identity through *aggressive* militarism.

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Pubblica Istruzione' *Nuova Antologia di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti* Volume Ottavo, Fascicolo V (Maggio 1868).

<sup>68</sup> Confino, 'Review Article', p.198.

<sup>69</sup> See Nicola Tranfaglia, 'After the Risorgimento: In Quest of an Identity' In Carlo Pirovano (ed.), Modern Italy: Images and History of a National Identity Vol. II From Expansion to the Second World War, (c.1983), p.9.

<sup>70</sup> Tranfaglia, 'Risorgimento', pp 9-10.

<sup>71</sup> Mazzini is associated with the saying that unified Italy was a corpse, not a living body. See Noether, 'Overview', p.780.

<sup>72</sup> Sforza, p.136.

<sup>73</sup> Antonio Labriola, philosopher cited in Tranfaglia, 'Risorgimento', p.10.

## Deconstruction

As early as 1870, Francesco de Sanctis had argued in his intellectual history of Italy that there was a need to “....renew and fulfill the Italian spirit, to give intellectual and moral unity to the geographical entity called fatherland.”<sup>74</sup> This sentiment was taken to greater extremes by the Italian poet Gabriele D’Annunzio who ‘....became the spokesman of a new, *aggressive, expansionist nationalism* [emphasis added]’ through a variety of mediums including newspaper articles, poetry, prose and drama.<sup>75</sup>

Intellectuals like D’Annunzio sought to retain the concept of greatness as a defining characteristic of the nation, *despite* the unimpressive reality of Italy’s domestic and international position. A disassociation was deliberately fostered between ‘real’ Italy, constituted by the ‘nation,’ which was inherently great, and ‘political’ or ‘state’ Italy, which was blamed for Italy’s ills. This concept was disseminated in a number of publications, most notably the Florentine journal *Leonardo* (1903-07).<sup>76</sup>

This perspective was powerful enough to culminate in the creation of the Nationalist Party in 1910. According to the Party, Italy’s greatness could only be fulfilled if liberty, both individual and as a principle of national sovereignty, were subdued in favour of a more militaristic and nationalistic concept of Italy’s global mission and greatness.

Aided by the poetic imagery and mass appeals innovated by D’Annunzio,<sup>77</sup> and casting aside the national principle in favour of the nationalist one, Fascist Italy under the leadership of Benito Mussolini emphasized the glories of Imperial Rome and Italy’s legacy of historical greatness. References to past glories were designed to inspire new

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<sup>74</sup> Noether, ‘Overview’, p.781.

<sup>75</sup> Noether, ‘Overview’, p.781.

<sup>76</sup> Walter L. Adamson ‘Avant-Garde Political Rhetorics: Prewar Culture as a Source of Postwar Fascism’ *History of European Ideas*.16 (4-6) (1993), p.754.



ones, and to ‘reawaken’ Italy.<sup>78</sup> Rome became institutionalized in Italian life through symbolic representation in the arts, the educational curriculum, military formations and Party imagery, and a focus on Roman civilization expressed in museums and research.<sup>79</sup> The increase in mass literacy that had taken place by the 1920s<sup>80</sup> and the development of new forms of technology to aid mass communication, such as radio and cinema, contributed to the greater ease with which the Fascist message could be disseminated.<sup>81</sup>

War had a primary role to play in the replacing the ‘soft’ values plaguing Italy with ‘hard’ ones of ‘discipline’ and ‘order.’<sup>82</sup> For Giuseppe Prezzoloni, editor of *Leonardo* and founder of *La Voce* (1909-1916),<sup>83</sup> war was above all the ‘....main means available for actually educating the Italians towards new discipline....’; a means of seeking redemption and renewal from decadence.<sup>84</sup> Encouraged by the advent of the First World War, an interventionist movement espoused the ‘myth’ of war as ‘....the central vehicle of national and spiritual self-renewal...simultaneously the practical means by which the second Italy will overcome the first and the spiritual means by which the void of modernity will be filled with meaning.’<sup>85</sup> Fascism embarked on the promotion of athletic prowess among the population to mimic military virtue, and to ‘....serve as an iconographic theme in the arts, figuratively merging the Roman ideal of the strong athlete and the modern Futuristic one....’<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> See Nicola Tranfaglia ‘The Leader and the Masses: The Example of Mussolini’ in Carlo Pirovano (ed.) *Modern Italy: Vol. II*, p.67.

<sup>78</sup> Tranfaglia ‘Mussolini’, p.67.

<sup>79</sup> Tranfaglia ‘Mussolini’, pp.103-104.

<sup>80</sup> According to Confino, a little under three quarters of the population was literate by 1921. See Confino, ‘Review Article’, p.197.

<sup>81</sup> Confino ‘Review Article’, p.196.

<sup>82</sup> Nick Carter ‘Nation, Nationality, Nationalism and Internationalism in Italy, from Cavour to Mussolini’ *The Historical Journal*, 39 (2) (1996), p.547.

<sup>83</sup> *La Voce* enjoyed a close relationship with Benito Mussolini and the Fascist Party in Italy.

<sup>84</sup> Adamson, ‘Avant-Garde,’ p.755.

<sup>85</sup> Adamson ‘Avant-Garde,’ p.754.

<sup>86</sup> Tranfaglia, ‘Mussolini’, p.92.



The Fascist regime set about rewriting Italy's military history, portraying '....the marshal vigour of the race and rehabilitating a forgotten military tradition....'<sup>87</sup> While Mussolini sought to achieve a national consensus in '....the image of a warlike and *aggressive* nation ....[emphasis added]'<sup>88</sup> he also embraced the military as a means for internal discipline and order.

Despite the advantages of literacy and developing mass media, Fascism, rather than strengthening Italian identity, was to almost irrevocably undermine it. The failure of Fascism to re-conceptualize a confident and cohesive Italian national identity could be attributed to the fact that Fascist myths of collective identity were belied by external circumstances. The question of Italian greatness, fueled by the rhetoric of Imperial Rome, had been the basis of Italy's pursuit of colonial ventures and its entry into the Second World War. Its limited success in colonial exploits, and the humiliating defeat endured in the war, undermined even this Fascist interpretation of greatness, leaving the Italian population with few, if any, sustaining myths of national identity.

Significantly, however, the emphasis of Fascism on aggression rather than defence proved ineffectual in engendering the patriotism of a 'true' nation. In this context, it is revealing that when Italy was itself invaded, the Fascists began to abandon the imagery of the party in favour of the imagery of the nation, for example by restoring power to the King as a symbol of the nation in order to call all Italians to '....the defence of unity, independence and freedom of the national state born from the Risorgimento.'<sup>89</sup>

Such efforts were nevertheless too little too late. The collapse of the Italian army and the flight of King Vittorio Emmanuele in 1943 seemed to speak definitively and conclusively to the dissolution of the Italian nation:

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<sup>87</sup> Hanlon, 'Siena', p.65.

<sup>88</sup> Tranfaglia, 'Mussolini', p.97.

<sup>89</sup> Gentile, pp.217-218.



If the army and the head of state are the ultimate symbols of a nation, nothing could have given Italians such an immediate and dramatic impression of the unraveling of the nation as the spectacle of an army in disarray and a head of state in flight, abandoning the nation to occupation by foreign armies. And for the Italians, nothing could have seemed more natural than to follow the lead set by the army and the head of state: they discarded the ideals of the *patria* and the nation as the military as the soldiers had discarded their uniforms....<sup>90</sup>

## Reconstruction

Post-war Italy was plagued by questions of identity. War, often declared to be a source of national consciousness formation,<sup>91</sup> had in Italy's case only contributed to its weakening. Moreover, not only had liberation been achieved at foreign hands; defence against Germany had essentially required the invasion of Italy. Having wished for liberation was thus to have wished for the collapse of the 'homeland' and to be somewhat complicit in the 'betrayal' of *La Patria*.<sup>92</sup>

It is perhaps not surprising that the Resistance, which sought to re-appropriate freedom as a national value, became instituted as a 'myth' of post-war Italian greatness and unity. Whatever the reality, the myth of the Resistance could allow the Italian nation to claim some ownership in liberation, and participation in national defence. Nevertheless, as discussed in the following chapter, the Resistance as a symbol remained volatile in its potential for divisiveness. Not only did Communists, Socialists and Center-Right Christian Democrats alike appropriate the Resistance; the Resistance risked excluding those who had not participated in it, or at the very least highlighting their complicity. Thus a myth of the Resistance had to be constructed that would incorporate *all* Italians, just as Fascism became an aberration, something not *of* the Italian people, but imposed *upon* them.

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<sup>90</sup> Gentile, p.230.

<sup>91</sup> See Chapter One of this study.

<sup>92</sup> Gentile, p.222



Greatness and civilization also continued to play a part in post-war national rhetoric, but they returned to their more Mazzinian conceptions, within which a philanthropic international mission for Italy, in concert with other independent nations, and free from imperialistic connotations, became paramount once again. Italy's mission was to spread its civilization peacefully— as a 'nation', and not as a 'power'. Within this conception of mission, the idea of Europe – and European integration - came to play an ever more important role (see Chapter Ten).

Here too, the impact of defence on Italian national mentality was manifest. Firstly, Italy's past experiences of defence, and reaction to Fascist wars of aggression, rendered her more disposed to integrationist projects. The idealist, philosophical and voluntarist conceptualizations of the nation in Italian mentality, influenced in part by Italy's historical experiences in defence, facilitated the conceptualization of a European identity and integration in which Italy could share.

Secondly, while Britain claimed proprietary rights over her defence in the Second World War, Italian defensive efforts during the liberation had been overtly internationalist in nature. For example, during the war, individuals serving in the Resistance founded a clandestine paper called *l'Unità Europea*, (European Unity); in 1941, members of the Resistance drew up a Manifesto for a Free and United Europe with a federal union as a top priority; in May 1944, a group representing the resistance movements of eight European countries (France, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Germany) signed an International Federalist Declaration drawn up by the Italians.<sup>93</sup> Defence, even in its Resistance incarnation, was therefore less significant as a marker of specificity in Italian post-war mentality than in Britain.

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<sup>93</sup> See Charles F. Delzell, 'Alberto Spinelli and the Origins of the European Federalist Movement in Italy' *History of European Ideas* 16 (4-6), pp.767-771.



Thirdly, whereas post-war France sought to extend ownership of the Resistance and regenerate national greatness through an emphasis on national defence, post-war Italy sought to minimize the emphasis on defence, accentuating instead the goals of pacifism. Even the Resistance was in essence ‘demilitarized’, described as ‘....not just a military phenomenon, or even a political phenomenon...Rather, ... first and foremost, a civic and moral phenomenon....’<sup>94</sup> European integration fit neatly with the pacifist agenda of a post-war Italy seeking to disassociate itself from the Fascist regime. After the war, antifascist politicians and liberals, many of whom had served in the Resistance, declared their support for European unification to end the nationalist rivalries that had spurred two world wars.<sup>95</sup>

Despite a positive agenda, the process of post-war identity reconstruction was not an easy one, and in the eagerness to disassociate Italy from aggressive nationalism, the importance of defence as an influence *on* and marker *of* national identity was overlooked (see Chapter Nine).

### CONCLUSION

Italy has been plagued by criticisms of a weak national identity, not least in the wake of the separatist movements that seek to divide North and South, or obtain autonomy for regions that profess a closer affinity to Germany or Austria than to Italy itself. An awareness of Italy’s ‘construction’ from above and the perception of a weak national identity below have become entwined in a causal relationship.

The example of Italy does not, however, convincingly support the argument that identity cannot be constructed. Without an elite conception of the Italian nation to begin

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<sup>94</sup> Comune di Treviso Mostra storica "Dal Risorgimento alla Resistenza alla Repubblica alla Costituzione." Treviso, Palazzo dei Trecento, 4 maggio-15 giugno 1958. Catalogo redatto a cura di Teodolfo Tessari e Roberto Zamproga. (Treviso, 1958), p.4

with, it is hard to imagine that the Italian state would have been unified, or that Italy would even exist as the object for a discussion of national identity.

Italy does, however, suggest that the absence of an emphasis on defence in national mentality can have a detrimental impact on the construction and cohesion of collective national identity. It is surely not a coincidence that the strength and fortunes of Italian national identity, from Fornovo to World War Two, fluctuated according to the success of, and emphasis on, defence.

The First World seems particularly pertinent. Not only did the shared experiences of war contribute to a somewhat broader dissemination of the national idea, but the association of the principles of sacrifice and national values, and the justification of a *defensive* war, contributed to the development of national sentiment.

On the whole, however, Italy's past failures in defence, combined with the consequences of Italy's experiments with aggressive militarism, contributed to a disassociation of Italian specificity and greatness from the imagery and symbolism of defence. Firstly, early failures in defence undermined confidence in Italy's destiny as a unified, political nation, encouraging the conceptualization and dissemination of Italian identity on intellectual, cultural and philosophical grounds. Defence thus impacted on Italian identity even before the creation of a unified Italian state.

Secondly, while foreign invasions encouraged the conceptualization of the Italian nation among intellectual elites, liberation was generally achieved at foreign hands, reducing the cohesive impact that defence and its associated imagery might have exerted on Italian identity. Indeed, while the wars for the unification of Italy were fought on the principle of liberation and unity, and the First World War was to some degree associated

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<sup>95</sup> Norman Kogan 'Nationalism and Europeanism in Italy after World War II' *History of European Ideas* 16, (4-6) (1993), p.773.



with the defence of national values, it would be fair to say that unified Italy has not fought a purely defensive war for its national territory in all of its history.<sup>96</sup>

Thirdly, the attempts by the Fascist regime of the 1920s, '30s and '40s to replace the 'soft' values of Italian identity with 'hard' ones founded in aggressive militarism were unsuccessful in generating a powerful sense of Italian national identity. The wars of the Fascist era, fought on an overtly aggressive agenda, served only to undermine Italian identity, while Fascism's aggressive militarism further de-legitimized defence as an agent of national identity. Italy consequently illustrates that the experiences and imagery of *war* may be insufficient to generate the cohesive identity that *defence* may be able to engender, or at the very least promote.

When all these factors are taken into consideration, the significance of defence to national identity, both in practice and in principle, should not be underestimated, even in countries where identity does not on the surface appear to be linked to a military mentality.

The following chapter continues to assess the impact of defence on Italian national consciousness by examining national mentality in Italy from 1956-1958, a period when attempts to re-conceptualize national identity away from the aggressive militarism of Fascism further eroded the legitimacy of defence, with interesting implications for Italian identity.

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<sup>96</sup> See Andrea Frediani Le Guerre dell'Italia Unita (Roma: Newton & Compton, 1998).

# CHAPTER NINE – ITALIAN NATIONAL MENTALITY, 1956-1958: DEFENCE AND POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION

## INTRODUCTION

In the mid-to late-1950s, the question of national identity in Italy was a delicate one. Fascist attempts to re-conceptualize Italian identity had undermined the philosophical and ideological foundations of Italy's Risorgimento identity. Moreover, the unified state that the Risorgimento aspired to had been brought into disrepute by the excesses of the Fascist state. The military, a source of identity-reaffirmation in France, had been discredited by association with Fascism. Furthermore, the Resistance, a post-war focus for Italian identity, risked dividing Italy between 'participants' and 'collaborators.' In terms of national identity, neither Italy's past nor its future held many certainties.

Uncertainty was reflected in defence debates in the Lower House of the Italian Parliament, and in related press commentary from the period. An awareness of the fragility of national identity and fear of disunity was manifest in the open discussions on the best means to reconstruct Italian national identity. This was not merely a matter of selecting flags or anthems, but a far deeper question of 'resurrecting' Italian identity itself, of a 'psychological preparation' for the nation, the ultimate aim of which was '....the formation of an integral national consciousness.'<sup>1</sup>

That such animated discussions on national identity and unity should have taken place in the context of defence policy debates is itself indicative of the fundamental relationship between defence and identity. This relationship is further underscored by concerns expressed in the House and the Press about the perceived denigration of the



Italian military and its marginalization in Italian society and consciousness. The case of Italy consequently provides an interesting study of attempts to reaffirm Italian national identity and unity with constrained recourse to the imagery of defence.

### **Considerations**

From 1948 onwards, a Christian Democrat majority dominated the Government of the Italian Republic. The Christian Democrat majority, however, shared the Italian legislature with a plethora of parties ranging in extremes from Communists to Fascists. The presence of these extremes both reflected and exacerbated competing perspectives on the direction post-war Italy should take. As this thesis is primarily concerned with the relationship between defence and national identity, this chapter focuses on the broad political viewpoints reflected in Italian discourse on defence rather than on specific parties and policies. These broad perspectives are those of the Left, (predominantly represented by the Communists and Socialists), the Center, (primarily occupied by the Christian Democrats, although the party swung to both the left and the right depending upon its leadership) and the far Right, (the Fascist Party).

### **ASPECTS OF ITALIAN MENTALITY, 1956-1958.**

#### **Fragile National Unity**

The discourse on defence policy in mid- to late-1950s Italy evokes an atmosphere of tension and transition with respect to national identity and unity. As one Member of Parliament expressed it: 'We find ourselves in a particularly delicate moment. In Italy we are re-evaluating all moral values.'<sup>2</sup> A first inkling that the question of national identity was a sensitive one derives from the manner in which Italian 'national values' were often

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<sup>1</sup> On. Cavaliere, *Atti parlamentari Camera dei Deputati. Discussioni, Resoconto S tenografico* Vol.3, 22 October 1958, p.3076.

referred to in the debates, but not always specified. Rather, a tendency existed to refer to ‘national values’ or even to the ‘homeland’ in more generic, and uncontroversial terms. An appeal, for instance, was simply and non-explicitly made to ‘....those national values which constitute the yeast and ferment of the unity of the nation....’<sup>3</sup> The ‘homeland’ was similarly described in poetic and inclusive terms as

....this stretch of land where one may not die, but where certainly one is born, and where one wishes one day to rest forever and for which its sons stand vigilant; the living over its frontiers, and the dead from its war cemeteries...[...] the homeland can constitute the point of convergence of many divergences, the point of contact that can eliminate many contrasts, the focal point where all those born in the same land can exist, and rediscover themselves as brothers.<sup>4</sup>

It must be borne in mind that Italian unity had been acquired relatively recently, and that quite powerful and diametrically opposed political factions were vying for primacy and influence on the direction Italy was to take. A lack of clarity in appeals to ‘national values’ consequently suggests that what these values were had yet to be resolved. More significantly, the nature of appeals to national values indicates an awareness that appeals to *specific* national values could further highlight the lack of consensus surrounding them. The cause of unity was consequently best served by generic national values.

Defence was both a context for the reflection of this tension and a potential instrument with which to ease it. Appeals to, or for, national unity constituted an inordinate proportion of the defence debates, and provide the second inkling of the fragility of the tapestry of Italian identity at the time.

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<sup>2</sup> On. Di Bella, *Discussioni*, Vol.27, 19 June 1956, p.26083.

<sup>3</sup> On. Dante, *Discussioni*, Vol.27, 20 June 1956, p.26161.

<sup>4</sup> On. Guerrieri Filippo, *Discussioni*, Vol.27, 21 June, 1956, p.26249.



### *The Symbolism of the Resistance*

Of singular prominence in the debates was the Resistance, revered not just for its part in the ‘liberation’ of Italy (see below), but also for the shining example it offered of the ‘unity of purpose’ within which Italians had been bound – a unity of purpose all the more resonant because of the notion of sacrifice which the Resistance, and its imagery, entailed.

The Christian Democrat President of the Republic, for example, praised the ‘tradition’ of the Resistance as ‘a point of reference and orientation’ which inspired ‘...petty interests ...[to be] “burned at the altar of the homeland.”’<sup>5</sup> The Resistance, the President declared, could never have triumphed if Italian men and women of every age and class had not “....in common duty ...[risen] above every difference of faith, ideology, interest [...] with simple heroism, in risk, and in sacrifice.”<sup>6</sup> Similarly, Ferrucci Parri, ex commandant-general of the *Corpo Volontari della Libertà* (Freedom Volunteers Corps) recalled how “In the Resistance, [...] different movements united, from the communists to the monarchists, but all had a unified purpose, because unified was the sense of struggle.”<sup>7</sup>

Ironically, however, the Resistance, a symbol of Italian unity likened to a second *Risorgimento*, also had divisive potential. Those who had been unified in the Resistance were now divided into a number of diverse political factions, each of which sought to appropriate the imagery of the Resistance for competing political aims. The Left, heavily supported by the Communist mouthpiece *L’Unità*, referred to the ‘ongoing Resistance’ in its appeals for nuclear disarmament.<sup>8</sup> Members of the Center-Right, on the other hand,

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<sup>5</sup> President Gronchi in ‘Gronchi Esalta la Resistenza’ *Popolo* 24 February 1958.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Ferrucci Parri, quoted in ‘La Resistenza Oggi Continua nella Lotta a Fondo per Arretare la Corsa alla Follia Atomica’ *L’Unità* 26 April 1957.

<sup>8</sup> See, for instance, the headline ‘La Resistenza Oggi’ *L’Unità* 26 April 1957.



stressed the need to preserve the liberty and democracy gained by the Resistance against the Communist threat.<sup>9</sup>

Moreover, not all Italians had fought in the Resistance – a large number had served in the Italian military. Thus, while the Resistance in theory offered a glittering, heroic and emotional symbol upon which to strengthen Italian unity, awareness existed that this symbolism was not entirely problem free. *L'Unità*, for instance, declared in an editorial that

[i]n raising the flag of the Resistance, we do not wish to maintain old divisions; on the contrary we intend to unite all Italians [albeit, of course, under a left-approved vision]...In raising the flag of the Resistance, we raise the unity of all those who have fought in the past and who fight today...to realize the ideals of the Resistance.<sup>10</sup>

Similarly, Italian President Giovanni Gronchi stated,

‘ ....in front of the tomb of the Unknown Soldier, symbol of a common sacrifice and glory, [the Resistance] cannot and must not be confiscated by any political faction that participated in it, just as it cannot and must not be angrily opposed by those who did not participate in it or who found themselves in the opposing trenches. In such a manner the resistance can be remembered with pride [...] and respect by all Italians. ’<sup>11</sup>

The description of those who served in the Italian army as ‘finding themselves’ in the opposite trenches may well be justified, but consciously or otherwise, it absolved those who had fought against the Resistance, allowing them to be incorporated into its unifying embrace.

Given the need for Italian unity at the time, it is perhaps unsurprising that at the celebrations of the Italian Resistance in 1958, the President of the Council banned the use of any symbol other than the *Tricolore* flag.<sup>12</sup> Even symbols in any individual colour of the *Tricolore* were forbidden, presumably to avoid the exploitation of the colour red by

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<sup>9</sup>See, for instance, ‘Resistenza e Libertà’ *Popolo* 25 April 1956; On. Cavaliere, *Discussioni*, Vol.3, 22 October 1958, p.3074.

<sup>10</sup> ‘La Bandiera della Resistenza’ *L'Unità* 25 April 1956.

<sup>11</sup> President Gronchi in ‘Gronchi Esalta la Resistenza’ *Popolo* 24 February 1958.



the Communists.<sup>13</sup> The example of the Resistance thus manifestly indicates not only an awareness of the fragility of Italian unity, but also illustrates attempts made to solidify and strengthen it in the context of defensive imagery.

### *Defence Undermined*

In post-war Italy, however, recourse to defensive imagery had to take place in the context of a conscious disassociation of Italian identity from connotations of militarism. Contemporary debate expressing concern over the denigration of the Italian military highlighted the extent to which attitudes in Italy had turned firmly against the instruments of war, even in their human form. The Center, for example, criticized the Press for its 'almost daily' 'disgraceful' articles regarding the 'best sons of Italy.'<sup>14</sup> The Minister of Defence was called on to intervene in this matter, on the grounds that to denigrate these 'sons of Italy' was to denigrate Italy itself.<sup>15</sup>

Of particular concern in this context was the role of the military in Italian national consciousness, both in terms of its place in the 'moral' psyche of the nation, and in terms of regenerating the military's own self-perception to enable it to fulfill this role. Whilst criticisms of the armed forces themselves were infrequent, references to the declining status of the military abounded. The perception of a general Italian disregard for the military and military virtues can be discerned primarily from the criticisms and observations of the Italian Right. As one member declared, while remarking on how little time was made available for defence debates in Italy: 'Military policy, in fact, is not very much in fashion, nor is it a policy that is liked, and I would almost go so far as to say that

<sup>12</sup> 'La Celebrazione della Resistenza' Il Nuovo Corriere della Sera 27 February 1958.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> On. Priore, Discussioni, Vol.27. 19 June 1956, p.26143.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

*in Italy, all that is military in nature has the air of being clandestine....[emphasis added]*<sup>16</sup>

The Right claimed that in the post-war period the concept of the military had been deliberately deconstructed, and that even the memory of Italy's wars of independence had been supplanted.<sup>17</sup> On an individual level, those who had seen active duty, even those who had been decorated for valour, were no longer shown due honour and respect, while, in the Italian expression, those who had 'made war' were shunned even by the military.<sup>18</sup>

On a more public, national level, the Right accused the Government of '....flaunting the most profound contempt for our glorious military traditions.'<sup>19</sup> The Government was criticized for being unwilling and afraid to honour Italian regimental flags in public, flags that were symbols of '....heroism, discipline, and loyalty to the homeland....' around which the 'generous sons of Italy' had fallen.<sup>20</sup> Military commemorations, it was claimed, were instead held 'slyly' and in secret.<sup>21</sup> The Right therefore talked of the need for a 'moral rearmament,' whereby all Italians, including those who had fought in wars, or might be called upon to fight them in the future, would no longer be treated as 'pariahs' for doing their duty.<sup>22</sup> As one Member appealed; '....what I ask today is above all that a sentiment of love for the military (not militarism) be reconstructed ...in Italy.'<sup>23</sup>

At this point one might remark that a disregard, or even contempt, of the military merely indicates that Italian national mentality was profoundly anti-militaristic, a result, no doubt, of its experiences of the Second World War and Fascism. The issue in as much

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<sup>16</sup> On. Romualdi, *Discussioni*, Vol.3, 21 October 1958, p.3000

<sup>17</sup> On. Greco, *Discussioni*, Vol.27, 19 June 1956, p.26112.

<sup>18</sup> On. Di Bella, *Discussioni*, Vol. 27, 19 June 1956, p.26083.

<sup>19</sup> On. Cuttitta, *Discussioni*, Vol.27, 20 June 1956, p.26136.

<sup>20</sup> On. Cuttitta, *Discussioni*, Vol.27, 20 June 1956, p.26135.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> On. Viola, *Discussioni*, Vol.27, 20 June 1956, p.26169.



as it relates to identity, however, is more complex. For many, the deconstruction of the role of the military in the Italian psyche was profoundly disconcerting, not just for its implications for the defence of the country, but also, and explicitly, because of the challenge it seemed to pose to Italian identity itself. The armed forces were perceived as essential to Italian consciousness, yet, as discussed above, concern existed that they were being discredited. Denigration of the armed forces consequently had implications for Italian national identity also;

....one does not *engender the pride of our armed forces and one does not reinforce national consciousness* when one says, for instance, that defeat was a victory and above all when the President of the Republic proclaims...that we should be *grateful to a foreign army* for its contribution to the “liberation” (it’s a euphemism) of Italy, or, in fact, to the defeat of our armed forces. One does not, in such a manner, contribute to *strengthening national consciousness, to augmenting military prestige* [emphasis added].<sup>24</sup>

Similarly, the comments of Antonio Segni,<sup>25</sup> Minister of Defence, were representative of a broader feeling among the Center and Right: *‘In the context of the resurrection of the Italian nation, the recovery of the armed forces is a fundamental phenomenon, a phenomenon which we must contemplate a moment to really feel its importance* [emphasis added].’<sup>26</sup>

In 1957, Italy’s President Gronchi commented explicitly on the unifying role of the military in a lecture on Italy’s armed forces reported by the Center-Right *Il Popolo*. For the President, military life was particularly significant in a country like Italy where citizens spoke different languages and had diverse traditions. Remarking on the problems of Italy’s northern region of Alto Adige, Gronchi argued that military life created a “‘[....] fraternity of intent and sentiment with their comrades in arms from other Italian

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<sup>23</sup> On. Priore, *Discussioni*, Vol.27, 19 June 1956, p.26138.

<sup>24</sup> On. Cavaliere, *Discussioni*, Vol. 3, 22 October 1958, p.3076.

<sup>25</sup> Antonio Segni was Italy’s Prime Minister from July 1956-July 1958, after which he became Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence.

<sup>26</sup> On. Segni, *Discussioni*, Vol.4, 23 October 1958, p. 3205-3206.



regions [...]” that lasted beyond the short duration of military service, and was “[...] proof of how the army can cement the unity of a people.”<sup>27</sup> The President identified a further practical role for the armed forces in carrying and disseminating the national idea; the military, he argued,

‘[...] with the sum of duties and sacrifices which it represents, is one of the highest expressions of the life of a nation. But the simple and profound truth is that it reflects and contains within it certain of the fundamental values of the spirit without which any sort of community could not survive. Accepting duty as a norm of one’s activity, feeling the *solidarity* of a common task and the nobility of serving the cause of all against every selfishness or personal and family benefit, gives military service the character and value of a moral school that forms individual and collective consciousness.’<sup>28</sup>

The armed forces may have ‘reflected’ and ‘contained’ ‘fundamental values’, but in the President’s opinion they had a clear formative role in the construction and preservation of collective identity. The President further suggested that war, particularly through the act of sacrifice, had a role in evoking the idea of the ‘homeland’ describing the

‘...brotherhood of man and an accumulation of memories that remain deep in our heart. When you think you have forgotten, after many years, [...] just a face, a mountain, a river suffice to re-awaken with vivid presence the moment in which with the supreme risk of sacrificing life, proof was given of devotion to the homeland. These are the memories, and this is the brotherhood that makes permanent the spiritual tradition of a Nation, in other words, the perpetuity of its life and its progress.’<sup>29</sup>

In this context, the notion of ‘sacrifice for the homeland’ imbued war with an implicitly *defensive* connotation; the mountains and rivers the President referred to were those of the *Patria*, or homeland, not of foreign lands. Given that the wars fought by unified Italy had been primarily aggressive in nature, it is significant that the President,

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<sup>27</sup> President Gronchi in ‘Un Discorso di Gronchi sul Ruolo dell’ Italia e delle Forze Armate’ Popolo 21 July 1957 and ‘Gronchi Conferma che l’Esercito Cementa l’Unità del Popolo Corriere 21 July 1957.

<sup>28</sup> President Gronchi in ‘Un Discorso di Gronchi sul Ruolo dell’ Italia e delle Forze Armate’ Popolo 21 July 1957. See also ‘Gronchi Esalta il Patrimonio di Idealità Cinybe di Popolo e Delle Sue Forze Armate’ Popolo 30 July 1956.

<sup>29</sup> President Gronchi in ‘Un Discorso di Gronchi’ Popolo 21 July 1957.



consciously or otherwise, invoked *defensive* war in his reference to the make-up of the spiritual tradition and infinity of the nation. Indeed, one way of disassociating the military from militarism was to place an emphasis on the Italian military's defensive role.<sup>30</sup>

Sentiments on the Right were, if anything, even more emphatic. In 1956, the Hon. Romualdi argued that the '.... armed forces are, or should be, the garrison of the fundamental values of human life....'<sup>31</sup> Two years later he declared that

....the armed forces are a fundamental element of people's morality. Peoples who end up hating military life, military discipline, weaken. The young, who don't like military discipline, who have no sense of what both history and the present owe to the military virtues represented by the flag, are destined to count for nothing.<sup>32</sup>

Romualdi further argued that Italy had always believed in certain moral and spiritual values that were essential to the progress of the nation, and which *the armed forces represented*: 'Serious nations have a cult of these values, and to these values we too must return in order to have the right vision of the path to follow, if we wish to walk that path in facts, and not in vague words, towards progress, towards security, towards freedom.'<sup>33</sup> Indeed, the Right advocated a 'cult of heroism' to inspire people to rediscover a '....love for the homeland...[and] the most noble sentiments of duty [in which] the pride in fulfilling such duty with complete devotion is reawakened...in every age, peoples have exalted and honoured their heroes.'<sup>34</sup> Similarly, it was argued from the Center that great ideals were all well and good, but could not be realized without 'supreme sacrifices'; the armed forces, and heroism in particular, would therefore

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<sup>30</sup> 'Gronchi Esalta il Patriomonio di Idealità di Popolo e delle sue Forze Armate' Popolo 30 July 1956.

<sup>31</sup> On. Romualdi, Discussioni, Vol 27, 21 June 1956, p.26234.

<sup>32</sup> On. Romualdi, Discussioni, Vol.3, 21 October 1958, p.3001.

<sup>33</sup> On. Romualdi, Discussioni, Vol.3, 21 October 1958, p.3006.

<sup>34</sup> On. Cuttitta, Discussioni, Vol.38, 13 July 1957, p.33671.



‘...always be necessary, and the fallen and maimed must always be held in the highest esteem, and held up as an example to new generations.’<sup>35</sup>

Even the Left recognized a relationship between Italy’s armed forces and Italy’s ‘values.’ While pushing for disarmament, for example, the Left still argued for a national role for the armed forces, which to them was more important than, and even independent of, military capabilities;

We do not need a large army, but rather armed forces that represent the quintessential essence of the military and spiritual values of our country. We need above all armed forces that are the expression of Italy, that have the sympathy of public opinion.<sup>36</sup>

The predominant perception was that the Italian military had to occupy a firm footing in national consciousness, or else they could not be counted upon to stand firm in the defence of Italy. The Italian military had to be a part of the national mentality, and have a role in national identity, in order to guarantee the defence of all the values that constituted that mentality. Only when the nation and military were fused, and the military sustained the nation as a whole, could the military itself be strong.<sup>37</sup> From the Center, for instance one Member described

....the moral significance that the armed forces have for a nation like Italy, which, having had the misfortune of suffering periods of oppression from which she freed herself, is well aware of the need to avoid falling again into dangerous situations, [of the need to ] ensure for her forces that consistency, that robustness and that spirit...that derive from the affection, the pride, the passion of all the nation.<sup>38</sup>

The question therefore became one of how to reconstruct military consciousness in order to best facilitate the reconstruction of national consciousness. The importance of symbolism to the military itself in ‘constructing’ national consciousness was consequently also a matter for open discussion. The armed forces, it was argued, had to

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<sup>35</sup> On. Petrucci, *Discussioni*, Vol. 27, 20 June 1956, p.26203.

<sup>36</sup> On. Boldrini, *Discussioni*, Vol. 27, 20 June 1956, p.26154.

<sup>37</sup> See, for instance, On. Clochiatti, *Discussioni*, Vol.38, 13 July 1957, p.33645.



be 'empowered' and it was necessary to '....construct the consciousness of those who must lead these forces...' <sup>39</sup> For example, a campaign was underway to restore the army's traditional grey-green uniform and with it, hopefully, the military's pride and eventually prestige. As one member to the right of the political spectrum complained: '[w]e cannot be satisfied with how our soldiers are dressed. Why should their uniforms be kaki? We have a tradition: our army fought at Vittorio Veneto in grey-green, it was drenched in glory in grey-green.' <sup>40</sup> Similarly, another member commented on the symbolism of the military and its importance to continuity, declaring (to general applause in the House) that

....like the alpine cap and the plumes of our infantry, I believe that the grey-green has its weight and importance! I believe that he who is able to wear again an old uniform that reconnects him to a whole tradition will gain in dignity and pride; I believe that he will feel more united with the fathers that fought in that grey-green in 1915-18! And it will be above all an example for our sons; but, above all, it will be an expression of the moral force of our armed forces, which must not fear the past, because from the pages of epics and glory that they have written in the past, they can look forward to a future of peace! <sup>41</sup>

Military symbolism was thus perceived as influential in highlighting national continuity, reflecting a powerful dimension of the relationship between defence and the conceptualization of national identity. Nevertheless, as evidenced by the debates, this symbolism was in the process of being eroded.

## Greatness

In mid- to late-1950s, therefore, the historical pattern of Italy's experiences with defence was showing little variation. A lack of success in, and the delegitimization of the means of, defence was giving impetus to a conceptualization of Italian identity that was orientated away from military symbolism. Moreover, Italian reaction to Fascism and the

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<sup>38</sup> On. Segni, *Discussioni*, Vol.4, 23 October 1958, p.3205.

<sup>39</sup> On. Romualdi, *Discussioni*, Vol.3, 21 October 1958, p.3006.

<sup>40</sup> On. Cuttitta, *Discussioni*, Vol. 27, 19 June 1956, p.26135.

<sup>41</sup> On. Selvaggi, *Discussioni*, Vol. 27, 21 June 1956, p.26234.

Second World War ensured that the role of military symbolism in Italian identity was not only marginalized, but also in some quarters vehemently rejected

### *Historical greatness*

Italian greatness thus had to be conceptualized in the context of a decline in political and military strength and status. In part, the recognition of this decline itself prompted the reassertion of a belief in Italy's national greatness, and in the need to restore the country to its natural state. The Center, for example, argued that Italy should not

....go begging, asking for recognition from others of our worth, a richness that is *all ours*, unsurpassed, and unsurpassable, made from our blood, our flesh...Our soldiers may be dead, but this blood and flesh still lives.<sup>42</sup>

Indeed, the army needed to be '....sustained in the hope...that the homeland will be restored to its *just fortunes* [emphasis added].'<sup>43</sup>

Similarly, the Right argued that Italy needed to '....become once again a country capable making itself be respected....'<sup>44</sup> and criticized the Government for not doing enough to put Italy '....on a par with the other states, and in relation to our geographic position and the importance of Italy in the Atlantic alliance.'<sup>45</sup> In advocating greater military strength, the Right asked whether Italians as they stood would be '....up to our responsibilities, ... *up to the prestige which is inherent in our status as a great country?* *Because, despite the evil intentions of our allies and also of many Italians, Italy is still a great country* [emphasis added].'<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> On. Guerrieri, *Discussioni*, Vol.27, 21 June 1956, p.26248.

<sup>43</sup> On. Greco, *Discussioni*, Vol.27, 19 June 1956.

<sup>44</sup> On. Romualdi, *Discussioni*, Vol.27, 20 June 1956, p.26242.

<sup>45</sup> On. Cavaliere, *Discussioni*, Vol. 3, 22 October 1958, p.3075.

<sup>46</sup> On. Romualdi, *Discussioni*, Vol.27, 21 June 1956, p.26242.



Even the Left, in its arguments against Atlantic policy, questioned whether it was wise to ‘....entrust our destiny to the *other great powers*....[emphasis added]’<sup>47</sup> implicitly attributing great nation status to Italy.

### ***Peaceful Greatness***

Interestingly, the decline in political and military prestige forced a renewed emphasis on more peaceful and cultural foundations of greatness. The Left, for instance, believed that Italy should strive to compete with other nations in developing atomic energy for peaceful purposes.<sup>48</sup> This would allow Italian genius and to ‘naturally’ guide Italy to peace; ‘[although it] is said that we Italians are a poor people, ... *it is certain that in intelligence we are second none*; why then, should we not listen to our good judgment that invites us to follow the road to peace.... [emphasis added]’<sup>49</sup> Similarly, the Center claimed that Italy had ‘....always been at the vanguard of every progress; it cannot now fall behind.’<sup>50</sup> The Right too emphasized Italian genius, underlining Italian ‘technical and industrial prestige.’<sup>51</sup> A widely shared perception of Italian genius thus continued to bolster notions of Italian greatness. Italy was associated with ingenuity in art, culture<sup>52</sup> and science, where it was argued to have ‘....in the past provided the finest minds....’<sup>53</sup>

### ***Honest Broker***

The perception of Italian greatness was also founded on a historical global role that Italy needed to regain.<sup>54</sup> The Right called for a vigorous role for Italy in the Mediterranean region, arguing that Italy had to responsibly fulfill its role as

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<sup>47</sup> On. Stucchi, *Discussioni*, Vol.27, 20 June 1956, p.26167.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.* See also ““Viaggeremo Presto su “Navi Nucleari”” *L’Unità* 13 February 1957; ‘Nell’ Industria Nucleare l’ Italia Balbetta Ancora’ *Avanti!* 27 August 1957.

<sup>49</sup> On. Clocchiatti, *Discussioni*, Vol.38, 13 July 1957, p.33650.

<sup>50</sup> On. Priore, *Discussioni*, Vol.38, 13 July 1956, p.33955.

<sup>51</sup> Di Bella, *Discussioni*, Vol.27, 19 June 1956, p.26084-85.

<sup>52</sup> On. Clocchiatti, *Discussioni*, Vol.38, 13 July 1957, p.33645.

<sup>53</sup> On. Clocchiatti, *Discussioni*, Vol.38, 13 July 1956, p.33649.

<sup>54</sup> See, for instance, On. Gronchi in ““L’Italia,” ha detto Gronchi “Deve Espandersi Pacificamente col Lavoro”” *Corriere* 14-15 October 1957.



‘representative’ of the Mediterranean in the West in order to ‘....carry some weight; in the absence of this, she will have only a geographical position.’<sup>55</sup> Indeed, the very fact that Italy was not a great military or nuclear power, and had no colonial interests, was considered justification for Italian prominence on the international stage: ‘Precisely because Italy’s hands are untied, it would be among the nations best qualified to suggest courageous decisions and take decisive initiatives...thus exerting a notable influence in Europe and the world.’<sup>56</sup> As the New York Herald Tribune reported in 1956, even Italy’s post-war weakness was now being presented as one of Italy’s major ‘assets.’<sup>57</sup>

### **Independence and Freedom**

Post-war weakness, however, had disquieting implications for Italy’s independence and freedom. As discussed above, a strong, and practical, imperative for the regeneration of the armed forces in moral, as well as military terms, was the awareness that only armed forces that were fully integrated into the national consciousness could be counted upon to defend the homeland. Indeed, given Italy’s recent history, it was in the context of independence and freedom that the virtues of the Armed Forces could best be extolled. For instance, during the 1956 festivities commemorating the birth of the Italian Republic, President Gronchi remarked that “‘....the Armed Forces are not instruments of threat and aggression, but the defenders of that independence that together with liberty constitutes that most valid...achievement of the Risorgimento.’”<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> On. Leonci, *Discussioni*, Vol.38, 13 July 1957, p.33660.

<sup>57</sup> ‘Italy’s Role May be as Go-between: Would Link West with Colonials’ *New York Herald Tribune* 22 January 1956. For a similar perspective see ‘Italy’s New Policy: Exploiting its Weakness’ *New York Herald Tribune* (European Edition), 20 January 1956.

<sup>58</sup> ‘L’Italia Onora le Forze Armate Presidio dell’ Indipendenza e della Libertà’ *Popolo* 2 June 1956.



Even more explicitly, Giuseppe Garibaldi, the heroic figure of Italian reunification, was hailed by the Center-Right as an eminent example of the ‘ideals of liberty that inspire action.’<sup>59</sup> Even the Socialists, however, declared their belief in the Armed Forces as the defenders of the ‘liberty’ and independence’ of *La Patria*.<sup>60</sup>

Freedom and independence thus occupied a prominent place in national mentality, the one rarely being mentioned without the other. The *Corriere della Sera*, for example, commented in 1958 that it was now taken for granted that the *Risorgimento* had ‘....sought at once unity, independence and freedom, and that never was it thought possible that a united and independent Italy could ever not be an Italy governed by free and democratic institutions’.<sup>61</sup>

Freedom was argued to nurture the ‘moral values’ of the country, in the classrooms and barracks alike.<sup>62</sup> Yet in Italy a greater emphasis existed on the concrete consequences of the *absence* of freedom and independence. References to Italy as free and independent were framed in the context of a nation that had only relatively recently acquired both, and yet which, under Fascism, had already experienced their loss. Italians were reminded that during the Fascist era they had longed to be free from “....the shame that every dictatorship brings with it to the heart of every citizen for the degradation of civil and human dignity, [the] fatal consequence of the loss or amputation of freedoms.”<sup>63</sup> Speaking to Italy’s Armed Forces in 1957, President Gronchi stated that the Resistance, which had reclaimed Italy’s freedoms, had “....perfect[ed] ... national unity and independence ... [and was] a generous contribution of sacrifice to a great cause

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<sup>59</sup> Senator Spallicci paraphrased in ‘Garibaldi Solennemente Commemorato al Parlamento’ *Avanti!* 5 July 1957.

<sup>60</sup> On. Lenoci paraphrased in ‘Ingiustificato l’Aumento delle Spese Militari’ *Avanti!* 14 July 1957.

<sup>61</sup> ‘Continuità Ideale’ *Corriere* 4 November 1958.

<sup>62</sup> On. Guerrieri, *Discussioni*, Vol.27, 21 June 1956, p.26249.

<sup>63</sup> President Gronchi in ‘Gronchi Esalta la Resistenza’ *Popolo* 24 February 1958.



of freedom and justice for other oppressed peoples.’’<sup>64</sup> The Resistance, in other words, had returned Italy to the natural state of the *Risorgimento*.

In the post-war world, this natural state had to be defended. Externally, Italy perceived itself as a front-line state in the Cold War, dependent for its ‘independence’ on external assistance, while the strength of the Communist party and the remnants of the Fascist movement appeared to threaten the country’s freedom from within.<sup>65</sup> Attachment to the question of liberty and independence in Italy was therefore founded on a clear perception of their vulnerability.

To some extent, the preservation of independence was necessary for freedom itself to be guaranteed. As Antonio Segni declared in 1956:

‘Italy can live only if that which is at the heart of our civilization is guaranteed; in other words, our faith and our spirit of liberty. In these years, we have worked not only for the reconstruction of the Country, but to guarantee its independence, both external, and internal.’<sup>66</sup>

Segni reiterated this sentiment two years later;

....the armed forces...are the foundation of the life of the nation. Just as for an individual the first concern is to live, so for a nation, the first concern is to live free and independent. The armed forces are the guarantee of this indispensable criterion.... To wish to defend one’s own freedom and independence is not to be militaristic.... It is necessary to assure all Italians that they will not awake one day, suddenly, and find themselves slaves, whereas the day before they were free!<sup>67</sup>

Segni again appealed to freedom and independence in his 1958 announcement that Italy would be equipped with intermediate range missiles: “The Government would be betraying the Country and would be failing in its duty to defend freedom and

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<sup>64</sup> President Gronchi’s declaration to the Armed Forces as reported in ‘Proclama di Gronchi alle Forze Armate per il 4 Novembre’ *Popolo* 4 November 1957.

<sup>65</sup> For perceptions of the Communist threat to freedom, see, for instance, ‘Resistenza e Libertà’ *Popolo* 25 April 1956, or On. Cavaliere, *Discussioni*, Vol.3, 22 October 1958, p.3074. For an example of remarks on the threat of ‘fascist tyranny’ see On. Clochiatti, *Discussioni*, Vol.27, 19 June 1956, p.26109.

<sup>66</sup> On. Segni in ‘L’On. Segni Esorta a Difendere la Libertà’ *Corriere* 24 April 1956.

<sup>67</sup> On. Segni, *Discussioni*, Vol.4, 23 October 1958, pp.3205-3206.



independence, if it did not provide its armed forces with the necessary weapons to defend Italy from any eventual aggression.’’<sup>68</sup>

Even commitment to the Atlantic Alliance was founded upon the principles of freedom and independence. The Minister of Defence was reported as saying in 1956 that ‘freedom’ was one of the ‘constant driving forces’ of Italian democracy, and that the Atlantic Alliance ‘....was more than an international obligation, but rather the fundamental stone upon which the destiny of the freedom and progress of its peoples rested.’<sup>69</sup> The Center-Right *Il Popolo* declared that ‘....freedom, won by the sacrifice of Italians, albeit not every Italian, is today the supreme good that enriches all Italians, even those who threaten it.’<sup>70</sup> In the House, the Right argued that they were ‘....wholly against any neutrality which would be disastrous for our country...for the freedom and liberty of the nation.’<sup>71</sup>

On the Left, criticisms against the Atlantic Alliance and arguments for neutrality were justified on the same bases of freedom and independence. Italy was inspired by the ‘ideals of freedom’ sanctioned by the Constitution.<sup>72</sup> Accepting the ‘burdens’ and ‘unknowns’ of the alliance conflicted with Italy’s ‘....traditions and...interests...[and meant] giving up independence, autonomy, the exercise of sovereignty....’<sup>73</sup> The international pacts to which the Government had committed Italy were argued to violate the country’s sovereignty and independence, and the alliance was perceived as ‘....constricting [Italy’s]...autonomy in decision-making....’<sup>74</sup> The Left boasted of their opposition to such Atlantic and European alliances, demonstrating, they argued, their

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<sup>68</sup> On. Segni in ‘Segni Conferma che le Forze Armate Saranno Dotate di Missili a Media Gittata’ *Corriere* 1 October 1958.

<sup>69</sup> ‘Taviani: La Sicurezza tutela la Pace’ *Popolo* 6 February 1956.

<sup>70</sup> ‘Resistenza e Libertà’ *Popolo* 25 April 1956.

<sup>71</sup> On. Cavaliere, *Discussioni*, Vol.3. 22 October 1958, p.3074.

<sup>72</sup> On. Leonci, *Discussioni*, Vol.38, 13 July 1957 p.33660

<sup>73</sup> On. Lenoci, *Discussioni*, Vol. 38, 1957, p.33660.



sense of responsibility for the honour and well-being of the entire Italian nation.<sup>75</sup> The prospect of American missile bases in Italy was similarly decried for the loss of independence and sovereignty over Italian territory that they would imply.<sup>76</sup> A 1957 agreement on nuclear research cooperation between the United States and Italy was also criticized for the 'drastic' clauses it contained regarding the rights of the United States Government in Italy, and for 'seriously reducing' Italy's independence.<sup>77</sup>

That a degree of independence in defence was significant to Italian national mentality is also illustrated by the emphasis placed on the Resistance. The Resistance was important as a means of alleviating national responsibility for Fascism,<sup>78</sup> but it also allowed Italy to at least try to claim that it had 'freed itself.'<sup>79</sup> In reality, an awareness existed that the liberation had been achieved at foreign hands. Similarly, while national forces were argued to be necessary for national defence, in practice, Italy was wholly dependent on the alliance. In 1957, the Italian Minister of Defence quite openly stated that Italy could not meet the requirements for her territorial defence without NATO assistance or NATO membership, listing the financial, material and technical assistance obtained from the United States.<sup>80</sup>

Defence policy, freedom and independence were clearly inter-linked. Whatever defence policy Italy embarked upon entailed a risk to national independence.

Disengagement from the Alliance risked contributing to a loss of national independence by exposing Italy to Communist pressure, while defence within the Alliance increased

<sup>74</sup> On. Leonci, *Discussioni*, Vol.38, 21 October 1958, p.2989.

<sup>75</sup> On. Clochiatti, *Discussioni*, Vol. 27, 19 June 1956, p.26104.

<sup>76</sup> On. Negraville, *Discussioni*, Vol.4, 23 October 1958, p.3179. See also 'Impegno Imprudente' *Avanti!* 7 December 1957.

<sup>77</sup> See *Avanti!* 'Le Clausole dell'accordo nucleare firmato fra Italia e Stati Uniti' *Avanti!* 3 July 1957.

<sup>78</sup> In 1956, for example, President Gronchi explicitly referred to the Resistance in this context, stating that '....with the shining annals of the antifascist resistance' Italy had made up for the 'dark' days of dictatorship. See 'L' Omaggio di Gronchi a Bligny Prima di Ripartire per l' Italia' *Avanti!* 29 April 1956.

<sup>79</sup> See, for instance, On. Segni, *Discussioni*, Vol.4, 23 October 1958, p.3205.

<sup>80</sup> On. Taviani, *Discussioni*, Vol. 38, 19 July 1957, p.34104-34105.



Italy's dependence on foreign states. It is little wonder that defence continued to impact upon the perception of freedom and independence as fundamental concepts in Italian national mentality.

### **Civilization**

In the defence discourse of the mid to late 1950s, independence and freedom often appeared together with civilization in a trinity of Italian national values. Segni, for example, recalled that

[f]orty years or so ago, a free and democratic people concluded the extraordinary events of the Risorgimento in an exciting unity of intent. I am convinced that even today Parliament and the Italian people will be in agreement on the defence of fundamental freedoms, independence, and civilization, providing the Government with the necessary means to ensure for the country these fundamental values.<sup>81</sup>

The Center and Right perceived civilization as one of the principal characteristics of Italian specificity, and a value that needed to be defended. The Right, for example, declared its support for a defence policy based on the Atlantic alliance on the grounds that for Italy's '....salvation, for the defence of her civilization, there was no other choice but to align ourselves with the free and democratic countries of the West.'<sup>82</sup>

The concept of civilization carried both Christian and political overtones. The Government, for instance, argued that domestically, a duty existed to '....safeguard the gains made by the Italian working class, which wants to be free and faithful to its western and Christian civilization, the whole value of which it appreciates.'<sup>83</sup>

### **Mission**

The notion of civilization in turn fed into the conceptualization of an Italian national mission – albeit a demilitarized one. On the international front, Italy was argued

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<sup>81</sup> On. Segni, *Discussioni*, Vol.4, 23 October 1958, p.3212.

<sup>82</sup> On. Cavaliere, *Discussioni*, Vol.3 22 October 1958, p.3074.

to have a particular, historical and humanitarian vocation in spreading civilization. It was argued that Italy as an international actor would be ‘....inspired by her traditions of civilization.’<sup>84</sup> Julius Caesar, for example, was described as ‘....the first citizen of Rome who understood the civilizing function of his homeland in the European and humanitarian sense.’<sup>85</sup> Indeed, the Center claimed Italy had, ‘....because of the youth of its unitary existence, its dynamic vitality, its immense and wonderful history, *the right to continue to give its precious contribution to the development of human civilization* [emphasis added].’<sup>86</sup>

### *A Peaceful Mission*

Italy’s international ‘mission’ was nonetheless, above all, peaceful. Italy’s post-war attempts to reconcile its aspirations to be a ‘great nation’ with its desire to disavow aggressive militarism forced the reformulation of the national mission in the terminology of the dove, not the hawk. Italy, for example, was argued to have an obligation to ‘export’ its

....peaceful merchandise, which is, after all, the most noble [quality] that can be exported to all the lands of the world. This is the significance [...] of the more or less misunderstood attempts to reinsert Italy in a wider circle of international life....<sup>87</sup>

Even the ships of Italy’s navy were urged by the Center to travel the seas as ‘*messengers of peace* [emphasis added].’<sup>88</sup>

The Left, in particular, referred to this ‘pacifist’ Italian mission; Italy’s duty was not just that of maintaining peace in Italy, but of ‘....fighting for disarmament, against political discrimination, *to save Italy and humanity from a new grave conflict* [emphasis

<sup>83</sup> On. Segni, *Discussioni*, Vol. 4, 23 October 1958, p.3212.

<sup>84</sup> On. Leonci, *Discussioni*, Vol.38, 13 July 1957, p.33660.

<sup>85</sup> On. Leccisi, *Discussioni*, Vol. 23, 15 March 1956, p.2434.

<sup>86</sup> On. Leone, *Discussioni*, Vol. 3, 20 October 1958, pp.22949-50.

<sup>87</sup> On. Gronchi in “L’Italia,” ha detto Gronchi “Deve Espandersi Pacificamente col Lavoro” *Corriere* 14-15 October 1957.



added].<sup>89</sup> The Left argued that war had been disastrous for Italy, and that the country needed to be safeguarded ‘....against any new and catastrophic adventures.’<sup>90</sup> As *L’Unità* boldly declared in a 1957 headline: ‘There is no other defence for Italy but a courageous policy of peace.’<sup>91</sup> Indeed, the Left linked its battle for peaceful policies to fundamental aspects of Italian history, claiming to have drawn strength from the

....best traditions of the Risorgimento and from the glorious Resistance, and from all the painful and negative experiences that had befallen our people, tormented our country, and at times sucked our army into wars that proved catastrophic for the Italian nation.<sup>92</sup>

Peace, the Left argued, could only be attained through a modest army, and through the abandonment of the pursuit of new missiles and atomic weapons,<sup>93</sup> although atomic energy itself should still be pursued for peaceful means.<sup>94</sup> The Left was therefore opposed to the deployment of nuclear missiles on Italian soil, arguing that rejecting deployment would demonstrate ‘....Italy’s contribution to peace between nations.’<sup>95</sup>

Yet even those who advocated a greater rehabilitation of the military in the context of the ‘resurrection’ of Italian national identity emphasized the link between Italy and peace. Antonio Segni, for example, declared himself to be ‘....among those most motivated by a love for peace. We do not love war.’<sup>96</sup> Everything possible had to be done to modernize Italy’s armed forces to enable them to ensure the ‘defence of peace.’<sup>97</sup>

<sup>88</sup> On. Priore, *Discussioni*, Vol.27, 20 June 1956, p.26143.

<sup>89</sup> On. Boldrini, *Discussioni*, Vol.3, 21 October 1958, p.2987.

<sup>90</sup> On. Clochiatti, *Discussioni*, Vol. 27, 19 June 1956, p.26104. See also ‘Il Diritto di Vivere’ *Avanti!* 30 August 1957.

<sup>91</sup> ‘Non vi é altra Difesa per l’Italia che una Coraggiosa Politica di Pace’ *L’Unità* 28 September 1957. See also ‘È il Momento per l’ Italia di Assumere Concrete Iniziative di Pace’ *Avanti* 16 October 1957.

<sup>92</sup> On. Clochiatti, *Discussioni*, Vol. 27, 19 June 1956, p.26104.

<sup>93</sup> On. Clocchiatti, *Discussioni*, Vol.38, 13 July 1957, p.33646.

<sup>94</sup> See, for instance, On. Clocchiatti, *Discussioni*, Vol.38, 13 July 1957, p.33649; ‘Le Clausole dell’Accordo Nucleare Firmato fra Italia e Stati Uniti’ *Avanti!* 3 July 1957.

<sup>95</sup> On. Negraville, *Discussioni*, Vol.4 23 October 1958, p.3184. The left was accordingly highly critical of ‘unnecessary’ expenditure on defence. See, for instance, ‘Revisione Atlantica’ *Avanti!* 4 May 1956; ‘Ingiustificato l’aumento delle spese militari’ *Avanti!* 14 July 1957.

<sup>96</sup> On. Segni in ‘“Segni Conferma”’ *Corriere*, 1 October 1958.

<sup>97</sup> On. Petrucci, *Discussioni*, Vol.27 20 June 1956, p.26202. See also Priore, *Discussioni*, Vol.27, 20 June 1956, p.26138.



The Navy and Air Force had to be modernized in order to allow Italy to remain the *parola* or very expression of peace,<sup>98</sup> and the Minister of Defence was urged to ‘....above all preserve the peace.’<sup>99</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Debates and press commentary from 1956-58 reflect both explicit acknowledgments of, and less explicit allusions to, a damaged, or at best fragile, national identity. The concepts of greatness, freedom, civilization and independence remained constituent elements of Italian identity; however, Italy’s historical experiences of defence and her recent experimentation with Fascism had influenced their re-alignment in a pacifist and non-aggressive context that simultaneously entailed the denigration and de-legitimization of the instruments of defence.

This denigration in turn impacted directly on Italian national identity. This relationship between the marginalization of defence and the fragility of Italian national identity is illustrated by the explicit and open discussions on reconstructing, or re-constituting this identity, and the numerous allusions made in this context to the role of defence. The debates thus emphasize the difficulties of regenerating national consciousness in post-war Italy in the context of the de-legitimization of the instruments of defence.

Additionally, in the post-war era, the defence of freedom, independence and even civilization depended more than ever on external support; dependence and weakness in defence continued Italy’s historical pattern of experience, which had to some extent prompted the conceptualization of Italian identity along cultural and apolitical lines (see Chapter Eight). It was perhaps unsurprising that in the post-war era dependence and

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<sup>98</sup> On. Priore, Discussioni, Vol. 27, 19 June 1956, p.26137

<sup>99</sup> On. Chiaramello, Discussioni, Vol.27 20 June 1956, p.26189.



weakness in defence (combined with a distancing from militarism) should have gone hand in hand with a re-emphasis on the peaceful and cultural conceptualization of Italian identity.

Nonetheless, attempts to root and pursue greatness in the imagery of peace seemed unconvincing and ineffectual in countering the challenges to post-war Italian national identity. Conversely, debates from the period illustrate the corrosive impact that the marginalization of defence and the denigration of the armed forces was perceived to be having on Italian national consciousness. While weak defence may not have been a root cause of weak Italian identity, the removal of defensive symbolism was at the very least perceived to be undermining the reconstruction of this identity.

Italian defence was therefore driven by, but also drove, Italian national identity. The causal relationship between a ‘weak’ Italian national identity and a ‘weak’ Italian national defence may thus not be as straightforward or one dimensional as one might expect. Weak defence, in other words, may have had a contributory effect on the weakness of Italian national identity, and not just been a result of the latter.

Therefore, while Italy is generally regarded as non-militaristic, the debates of the mid- to late-1950s highlight the pivotal impact that defence – or the absence of defence – may have on national identity. The following chapter examines this impact in the context of Italian perceptions of European identity.

# CHAPTER TEN – ITALY AND EUROPE: IDEALISM, IMPOTENCE AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

## PAST EXPERIENCES AND CONTEMPORARY IMPERATIVES OF DEFENCE

### INTRODUCTION

Chapters Eight and Nine argued that defence – or the absence of defence – had a profound impact on the development of Italian national identity. Historically, failures in defence undermined confidence in the idea of a political, unified Italian nation-state, and contributed to influencing a national identity founded in cultural and spiritual imagery. Moreover, the marginalization of defence in Italian national mentality had a negative impact on attempts to regenerate Italian identity in the post-war era. This chapter discusses Italian perceptions of Europe, and of its role within Europe in this context, through reference to Italian parliamentary and press debates on Europe from 1956 to 1958.

Initially, Italian reactions to European integration in the sphere of defence were unenthusiastic. For example, the 1948 Brussels Treaty establishing organized military links between Britain, France and the Benelux countries, was not considered to be an appropriate ‘starting point’ for Italian participation in European unification.<sup>1</sup> In its attempts to disassociate itself from its recent militaristic past, Italy was increasingly embracing pacifism as a strong element of the national self -image, and Italian leaders feared strong negative reactions to military integration from even mainstream public opinion.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Primo Vannicelli, ‘Italy, NATO and the European Community: The Interplay of Foreign Policy and Domestic Politics’ *Harvard Studies in International Affairs* (31) (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Center for International Affairs, 1974), p.47.

<sup>2</sup> Filippo Andreatta and Christopher Hill, ‘Italy’ in Jolyon Howorth and Anand Menon (eds.), *The European Union and National Defence Policy* (London; New York: Routledge, 1997), p.68. See also Maddalena Guiotto, ‘Italia e Germania Occidentale Dalla Fine della Seconda Guerra Mondiale alla Fine degli Anni



Defence as a vehicle for European integration did therefore not appear to have promising auspices in early post-war Italy. Nevertheless, as early as 1945, defence was one of the spheres in which Italy began to reinsert herself in European politics and move towards European integration.<sup>3</sup> In part, it was the perception of the need to defend against external threats that prompted greater Italian support for European unification. During meetings in the 1950s between Italian and West German leaders, the central theme was the threat from the Communist East and the necessary responsive measures, while in 1951, Italian Minister of Defence Taviani emphasized the need to promote Franco-German-Italian cooperation to avoid Western Europe falling under either Russian or excessive American influence.<sup>4</sup>

With the intensification of the Cold War and the advent of the Korean War, the Communist threat to Italy appeared even more pronounced, particularly given the strength of Italy's own Communist Party. The need to rearm West Germany in defence of the West consequently became more profound, yet for the security of European states, this rearmament had to take place in a European context. Moreover, Italy favoured the inclusion of Germany in the defence of the West because it promised to extend Italy's own defensive perimeter from the Reno to the Elba, protecting northern Italy in the event of Soviet attack.<sup>5</sup> The imperatives of defence thus called for a European integration that included a defensive element.

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Cinquanta' in Maddalena Guiotto and Johannes Lill, Italia-Germania: Deutschland-Italien 1948-1958. Ravvicinamenti – Wiederannaherungen (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1997), p.48.

<sup>3</sup> The first Italian missions to Germany in 1945 and 1947, for example, were military ones, because political and consular missions were not permitted by the allied powers governing West Germany. Similarly, Italy's Foreign Minister Count Carlo Sforza, asked to be included in the solution to the German problem because of the importance of the issue to the future of Europe – in this sense, a perception of a European role for Italy stemmed from a need to enhance security on the continent in relation to the German question. Guiotto 'Italia e Germania', pp.30-38.

<sup>4</sup> Guiotto 'Italia e Germania', p. 68 & p.90.

<sup>5</sup> Guiotto 'Italia e Germania', pp.94-95.



Defence, however, was also perceived in some circles as a means to deeper integration, both in Atlantic Alliance and European terms. On a visit to Norfolk, USA, for example, President Gronchi had declared that having been a soldier during the First World War he could understand and appreciate the importance of military life to the psychological development of Atlantic solidarity.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, when discussing the integrative impact of the armed forces on identity in Italy, Gronchi expressed his hope that integration in defence could have an impact on relations between ‘peoples.’<sup>7</sup> Solidarity in defence could thus lead to political and economic solidarity also.<sup>8</sup>

In a more specifically European sphere, in the early 1950s, Alcide de Gasperi, founder of the Italian Christian Democrats, emphatically supported the proposed European Defence Community as a vehicle for European integration, focusing on the idea of a European Army as the foundation of European unity.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, Italian initiatives were instrumental in the eventual inclusion of Article 38 in the treaty of the European Defence Community, which provided for concrete steps towards a federal constitution and a system of federal states.<sup>10</sup> Italian governing elites were adamant that a European defence architecture would require democratic control, which in turn would ‘naturally’ mold a political identity for Europe that would extend beyond the realm of defence.<sup>11</sup>

An inkling of the significance of defence to European identity was therefore evident in Italy, despite Italy’s internal tendencies to marginalize defence in national mentality.

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<sup>6</sup> ‘Gronchi a Norfolk al Comando NATO’ *Il Popolo* 3 March 1956.

<sup>7</sup> President Gronchi in ‘Gronchi Conferma’ *Corriere* 21 July 1957.

<sup>8</sup> ‘See, for instance, ‘La Riforma della NATO nei Colloqui tra i Presidenti Gronchi e Coty all’Eliseo’ *Avanti!* 27 April 1956; ‘Il Discorso di Gronchi al Quai d’Orsay’ *Corriere* 27 April 1956; President Gronchi in ‘Gronchi e Coty Concordi per Una Politica di Distensione’ *Avanti!* 26 April 1956.

<sup>9</sup> See Guiotto, ‘Italia e Germania’, p.101; A. De Gasperi, ‘La CED Come Strumento di Pace’ in M.R. De Gasperi (ed.), *De Gasperi e l’Europa*, (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1979), pp.124-129 and 126-127.

<sup>10</sup> Guiotto, ‘Italia e Germania’, p.101; Giuseppe Petrilli, *La Politica Estera ed Europea di De Gasperi* (Roma: Edizioni Cinque Luni, 1975), p.75.



## Considerations

It should be mentioned at the outset that commentary on Europe from Italy's Left was less enlightening on Italian mentality than that from Italy's Center and Right. Commentary from Italy's Communist Party and to some extent the Socialist Party focused almost exclusively on the likely economic and social impact of the proposed Common Market on Italy's workers, particularly those in the southern Italy and Sardinia.<sup>12</sup> The Common Market was perceived primarily as a cooperative arrangement that would inevitably further the interests of capitalism, rather than as the culmination of Europeanist ideals of integration.<sup>13</sup> The ideologically-based rejection of the Common Market as anything more than a capitalist construction constrained the flow of debate from the far Left to a narrow ideological plane.<sup>14</sup>

When it came to the ratification of the Rome Treaties, the Italian Communist Party was the only Party to reject the Common Market outright, while the Socialists abstained.<sup>15</sup> The majority of political parties represented in the Italian parliament – a contrasting coalition of monarchists, republicans, Christian Democrats, and neo-fascists – voted in favour of the European Economic Community. Representatives from most parties in parliament spoke on Europe in the terms outlined below; Europe was perceived as a spiritual entity, founded on a common history, civilization and values, with a

<sup>11</sup> Petrilli, pp.71-79; p.101; F. Roy Wills, *Italy Chooses Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), p.113.

<sup>12</sup> See, for instance, On. Montagnana, *Discussioni*, Vol.38, 18 July 1956, pp.34022-34023; 'Dopo il Voto' *Avanti!* 1 August 1957; 'Europa Economica e Politica' *Avanti!* 28 July 1957; 'MCE ed Euratom' *Avanti!* 13 July 1957; 'L'Italia Non è Pronta all' Attuazione del MEC' *Avanti!* 15 October 1958.

<sup>13</sup> See, for instance, On. Caprara, *Discussioni*, Vol.39, 24 July 1957, p.34440.

<sup>14</sup> For examples of far Left commentary on Europe see On. Pajetta Gian Carlo, *Discussioni*, Vol.39, 25 July 1957, pp.35421 & 34528; On. Grilli, *Discussioni*, Vol.39, 26 July p.34630; 'Dopo il Voto' *Avanti!* 1 August 1957.

<sup>15</sup> The Socialist decision to vote in favour of Euratom and to abstain from the vote on the Common Market created friction within the party. For contemporary coverage of the Socialist decision to abstain and of the subsequent ruptures within the socialist camp see 'I Socialisti si Asterranno nella Votazione sul Mercato Comune' *Corriere* 20 July 1957; 'Discorda fra i Socialisti' *Corriere* 19 July 1957. <sup>15</sup> For a Socialist perspective on the differences between the Communist and Socialist standpoints see 'Dopo il Voto' *Avanti!* 1 August 1957; 'Posizioni Equivoche' *Corriere* 21 July 1957.



common destiny. Even ‘Little Europe’ of the Six was primarily portrayed as a political, not economic, creation, driven by ideals. Whether such perceptions, derided by the Left, represent the disingenuous ploys of capitalists or the naive beliefs of gullible idealists, they nevertheless offer insights into Italy’s ‘European identity.’

## **DEFENCE, IDENTITY AND ITALIAN CONCEPTIONS OF EUROPE: CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL REFLECTIONS**

In contrast to the predominantly economic and unsentimental conceptualizations of Europe manifest in Britain, Italian conceptualizations of Europe reflected strong historical, spiritual and cultural dimensions within which the impact of defence seems, at first, conspicuously absent. In this respect, Italian conceptualizations of Europe at first appear indistinct from those evident in France where, in contrast to Italy, defence occupied a very prominent place in national mentality.

### **Greatness and Mission**

#### ***Europe’s Perpetual Mission***

In Italian debates, Europe was frequently described as ‘....the ancient continent, ...this ancient, eternal Europe.’<sup>16</sup> The Common Market was argued to represent a historic event for all those who cherished ““spiritual and cultural values.””<sup>17</sup> The process of European integration was portrayed as almost inevitable continuation of European history, a history without which the Common Market would be merely an ‘artificial creation.’<sup>18</sup> Not just Europe, but the process of European integration had a firm historical foundation that culminated in a *European* destiny and vocation:

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<sup>16</sup> See, for instance, On. Geremia, *Discussioni*, Vol.39, 25 July 1957, p.34490; On. Bartole, *Discussioni*, Vol.38, 18 July 1956, p.33996.

<sup>17</sup> On. Cavallari in ‘La Camera Inizia a Discutere il Mercato Comune e l’Euratom’ *La Nuova Stampa* 19 July 1957.

<sup>18</sup> On. Pasini, *Discussioni*, Vol.38, 18 July 1956, pp.34008-34009.



Whoever has even the smallest familiarity with history cannot but recognize that this Europeanist undertaking is always present in the history of the European continent. Every era has, naturally, its shapes, every era has its way of sensing this European unity, has its interpretations, but it is a constant given....<sup>19</sup>

Efforts for European unity were thus not directed at the creation of something new, but toward the rediscovery of something that had existed in the past, and toward the attainment of a legacy for the future.<sup>20</sup> Disunity, not unity, was the aberration, for unity had existed under the Roman and Carolingian Empires, but then been lost to a mix of ‘....customs barriers, political interests, ...[and] wars that have bloodied all the lands of our continent.’<sup>21</sup> The European treaties were therefore argued to mark a *return* to European unity, part of the ‘historical necessity’<sup>22</sup> of European integration. Voting for the Treaties did not represent an innovation, but rather ‘....the inexorable laws of history....’<sup>23</sup> As one right-wing member of the House expressed it, the ‘....designs of Providence push the various European nations towards the path of an ever more accentuated political and economic solidarity, in which the sovereignty of the individual states is destined to find necessary limits.’<sup>24</sup>

It should perhaps not be surprising, given the spiritual and cultural emphasis in Italian mentality, that the construction of Europe should have been conceived as a spiritual and cultural enterprise, a task for intellectuals as well as politicians. The Christian Democratic *Il Popolo*, for instance, called for the construction of a society of

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<sup>19</sup> On. Pasini, *Discussioni*, Vol.38, 18 July 1956, pp.34008-34009.

<sup>20</sup> ‘L’Europa è un Patrimonio che Possiamo Lasciare ai Giovani’ *Stampa* 3 July 1957.

<sup>21</sup> On. Pasini, *Discussioni*, Vol.38, 18 July 1956, p.34009.

<sup>22</sup> On. Cavallaro, *Discussioni*, Vol.38, 18 July 1956, p.34023.

<sup>23</sup> On. Matteotti, *Discussioni*, Vol.39, 25 July 1957, p.34484.

<sup>24</sup> On. Alliata di Montereale, *Discussioni*, Vol.27, 14 June 1956, p.25946.



European men of culture, and the creation of institutes and common forums for intellectual exchanges.<sup>25</sup>

### *Europe's Mission Realized through Unity*

Europe, therefore, had a spiritual quality, a destiny conferred by history, and a gift of civilization to bequeath, a preordained, or at the very least inherent, mission, but one which could best be served by European unity. Europe, it was argued, this '....ancient Europe, rich in history and traditions, will be able to rediscover its millennial mission of civilization and peace only in its unity.'<sup>26</sup> In effect, peace was portrayed as the eternal driving factor behind Europeanist vocation. As one Member of Parliament expressed it:

Every spring, the strongest youth was recalled to fight on the lands of Europe to reestablish a border, to reawaken ancient hatreds, ancient grudges, to reestablish supremacies. Therefore, the first desire sustaining the Europeanist vocation is a profound need for peace. The ideal of peace is thus the constant... that drives the thinkers, philosophers and poets to long for the unity of Europe from the Middle Ages to the late Nineteenth Century [emphasis added].<sup>27</sup>

Only European unity could therefore remedy the decrease in Europe's economic, political and even 'moral might.'<sup>28</sup> Once unified, Europe could return to the '....inexhaustible energies of her ...civil traditions, ...[and] take up again her task of stamping the mark of her decisive contribution on the course of human progress.'<sup>29</sup>

Moreover, the decrease in Europe's influence had resulted in a power vacuum that '....those conscious of being Europeans, in the awareness of their own duties and their own mission, do not want to be filled in any way by any but themselves.'<sup>30</sup> *Il Popolo*, for

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<sup>25</sup> 'L'Europa dei Scrittori' *Popolo* 21 October 1958. See also 'Una Cittadinanza Europea' *Stampa* 25 July 1957.

<sup>26</sup> On. Cavallaro, *Discussioni*, Vol.38, 18 July 1956, pp. 34024.

<sup>27</sup> On. Pasini, *Discussioni*, Vol.38, 18 July 1956, p.34009.

<sup>28</sup> On. Penazzato, *Discussioni*, Vol.39, 25 July 1957, p.34537.

<sup>29</sup> Alcide de Gasperi quoted by On. Vedovato, *Discussioni*, Vol.38, 20 July 1956, p.34169. Similarly, *Il Popolo* called for Europe to rediscover her 'soul' and 'ideology' in order to overcome inertia and find a new role.

<sup>30</sup> On. Penazzato, *Discussioni*, Vol.39, 25 July 1957, p.34537.



instance, called for Europe to rediscover her ‘soul’ and ‘ideology’ in order to overcome her inertia and find a new role.<sup>31</sup>

### *Italy’s Mission in Europe*

This rediscovery was a process in which Italy was believed to have a central role to play. For the Center and Right, Italy had ‘....paraphrasing an expression of Mazzini, a *continuous mission*....[emphasis added]’<sup>32</sup> in the ‘....creation of a new Europe, of a young Europe, full of faith in herself and in her future, and determined to *reassume her role as the driving force of world history* [emphasis added].’<sup>33</sup>

The symbiotic relationship between Italy’s altruistic mission and her perceived role in Europe was particularly evident in statements from the Center and Right. Foreign Minister Pella, for example, emphasized that maintaining Italy in the place “....assigned to her by history....” required maximum cooperation with Western states, particularly those of NATO and the nascent European Community.<sup>34</sup> More specifically, it was argued that in pursuing a Europeanist policy, ‘.... the Italian people, serving the cause of Europe and of solidarity between peoples, serves at the same time the cause of its own destiny and of a higher tomorrow.’<sup>35</sup> Italy, indeed, was “....destined to have an important role in the Community....”<sup>36</sup> and ‘....if well guided and aided by a Government that has a minimum of European inspiration, and a maximum of Italian courage, ...[could] offer a great contribution to the resurrection of peoples humiliated in misery, and to understanding between states....’<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> ‘L’Europa Nazione Cristiana’ Popolo 3 September 1958.

<sup>32</sup> On. Anfuso, Discussioni, Vol.39, 25 July 1957, p.34518.

<sup>33</sup> On. Gaetano, Discussioni, Vol.39, 26 July 1957, p.34607.

<sup>34</sup> On. Pella, quoted in ‘Fine del Neo-Atlantismo’ Corriere 17 October 1957. Elsewhere, Pella cited the maintenance of this ‘place assigned by history’ as one of the four principal objectives of Italian foreign policy. See ‘Quattro Obbiettivi Fondamentali per l’Italia’ Corriere 17 October 1957.

<sup>35</sup> On. Domenidò, Discussioni, Vol.3, 25 October 1958, p.3415.

<sup>36</sup> On. Rubinacci Discussioni, Vol.39, 25 July 1957, p.34503.

<sup>37</sup> On. Mazzali, Discussioni, Vol.3, 24 October 1958, p.3368-3369.



In part, Italy's mission in Europe was discussed in relation to the preservation of peace. The Italian Government framed its pursuit of European unity in the context of peace, declaring that Italy was '....conscious of its duties and responsibilities, which culminate definitively in the supreme aim of salvaging peace....'<sup>38</sup>

Similarly, an Italian mission was evident in the preservation of European civilization. The Christian Democratic *Il Popolo* cautioned that one

....should never lose sight of the Christian task that Italy has always had and, in particular, seems to have at this moment, of imparting to other peoples, even those more powerful or even those less developed, the irreplaceable values of its civilization.<sup>39</sup>

In Italy then, as in France, a sense of European mission, and national mission within Europe, was apparent. Indeed Europe was seen as part of Italy's 'political vocation.'<sup>40</sup> Italy had been, and continued to be '....a factor of cohesion and propulsion....' in '....all the initiatives aiming towards solidarity and unity.'<sup>41</sup> Italy was the '....forerunner [or standard-bearer] of European unity....'<sup>42</sup> and Europe could only continue to live '....with us and through our endeavours.'<sup>43</sup>

### *Ideological Foundations*

The ideological foundations for the perception of an Italian mission in Europe were located in the intimate relationship between the Risorgimento movements for national unity and those for European unification, a relationship that the Center and Right perceived to be particularly prominent. This perception was primarily revealed in references to Italy's intellectuals, including Mazzini who, for example, had '....fought

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<sup>38</sup> On. Martino in 'L'Integrazione Europea Nostro Obbiettivo Fondamentale' *Popolo* 14 April 1956.

<sup>39</sup> 'Una Buona Strada' *Popolo* 1 January 1957.

<sup>40</sup> On. De Marsanich, *Discussioni*, Vol.3, 23 October 1958, p.3173.

<sup>41</sup> On. Martino Edoardo, *Discussioni*, Vol.27, 14 June 1956, p.25990.

<sup>42</sup> On. Rubinacci, *Discussioni*, Vol.39, 25 July 1957, p.34506.

<sup>43</sup> On. Colitto, *Discussioni*, Vol. 27, 12 June 1956, p.25826.



with tenacity [for united Europe] so that he can justifiably be defined the first citizen of Europe.’<sup>44</sup>

The Europeanist tradition was therefore argued to run ‘....through the thread of Italian post-war politics’ and have ‘remote’ origins that

.... ideologically blur with the origins of our unitary State... There is an uninterrupted current of thought, confirmed... even by the sum of spiritual teaching Providence desired should have its seat here in Rome [emphasis added].<sup>45</sup>

Italy was consequently famous ‘....for both ancient and recent actions, as the most ardent and tenacious supporter of all initiatives on unification’ and the fact that the Common Market Treaties had been conceived in Messina and concluded in Rome were interpreted as

....eloquent proof of our contribution. Those who have dedicated a great deal of their...activities to this contribution can today declare themselves satisfied with legitimate pride, in having with their actions followed in the footsteps of their predecessors, who wanted the reconstruction of Italy indissolubly tied to the unification of Europe.<sup>46</sup>

It was therefore not just a historical, ideological bond that tied Italy and Europe, but also an ideology of destiny, developed in Italian mentality by the same philosophical thought which had helped to shape Italy itself. The notion of a Europe without Italy appeared inconceivable to the majority of Italian parliamentary political opinion. For instance, while the ‘European bridge’ between France and Germany was welcomed, it was also

....clear that the European bridge cannot but pass through Rome also, indeed, it must pass through Rome. The presence of Italy in the European

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<sup>44</sup> On. Pasini, Discussioni, Vol.38, 18 July 1956, pp.34008-34009; On. Pacciardi, Discussioni, Vol.39, 26 July 1957, p.34599.

<sup>45</sup> On. Pella, Discussioni, Vol.39, 30 July p.34766.

<sup>46</sup> On. Martino Gaetano, Discussioni, Vol.39, 26 July 1957 p.34611. See also On. Colitto, Discussioni, Vol.39, 30 July 1957, p.34803.



organizations must therefore be the most active possible, having as its objective and destination, the *federal union* of Europe.<sup>47</sup>

### *A Europe of National Missions*

Yet in Italian mentality, federal union and national greatness and specificity were not mutually exclusive concepts. On the contrary, it was precisely the perception of Italy's tradition of greatness that demanded Italy proceed on a path that led inexorably to Europe. For one deputy on the Right, for instance, European integration was a matter of safeguarding Italy's particular heritage;

Our country...has behind it centuries of most civilized history, its future cannot be any less glorious...Let us prepare ourselves, therefore, for when the time will be ripe, to enter the new Europe that is arising, but without renouncing the values of the national tradition, and instead exalting them and *perfecting them as our vital contribution to a common heritage* [emphasis added].<sup>48</sup>

This common heritage was to be the product of the realization of the principle of nationality, which demanded that national characteristics be respected. Reflected in this principle were echoes of the concepts of voluntarism and national mission, whereby Europe could only succeed if citizens within nations, and nations themselves, were free to fulfill their destinies and reach unity voluntarily:

We should in any case rest assured that it [Europe] does not offend, and will never offend, the principles of the nations, because it is still only within nations that the citizens of Europe can rediscover themselves, recognize each other...and be able to be true protagonists in this new phase of the great history of the West.<sup>49</sup>

The Italian Europeanist vocation was therefore itself part of a broader perception of Italy as '.... the classical land of utopias, of humanism and universalism....' and an

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<sup>47</sup> On. Bettiol, *Discussioni*, Vol.3, 23 October 1958, p.3165. See also On. Fanfani Minister for Foreign Affairs *Discussioni*, Vol.3, 28 October 1958; Repubblicani e Socialdemocratici Favorevoli al Mercato Comune Europeo' *La Nuova Stampa* 24 June 1957.

<sup>48</sup> On. Alliata di Montereale, *Discussioni*, Vol.27, 14 June 1956, p.25946.

<sup>49</sup> On. Romualdi, *Discussioni*, Vol.38, 26 July 1957, p.34613.



explanation for Italy's '....political *primacy* in this effort to create Europe....'<sup>50</sup> Indeed, if Italy had been among the first to proclaim and 'defend' the idealistic, utopian principle of nationality, she could not "...be the last in the political era of the great European federations."<sup>51</sup>

In Italian mentality, the principal of nationality did not therefore preclude European unity. Even the attainment of Italian unification was placed in the context of a larger, unified, Europe:

Unity without uniformity... was the creative inspiration of the federal state.... [W]e intend to construct a new Europe in which the qualities of individual nations will not be suffocated, but rather will flourish and prosper, in the tradition of the philosophers of the last century...who were always animated by the anxious search for supranational norms that were universally valid, and also ... [in] the tradition of the crafters and prophets of the Italian Risorgimento, who wanted Italy to be unified but in the larger vision of a Europe itself unified by common traditions and laws of liberty.<sup>52</sup>

Progress toward the federation of peoples could thus only occur as the culmination of each nation's specific cultural mission; in terms of Italian and European unity the principle of *cultural*, rather than political, nationality was predominant.

Therefore, where French conceptions of greatness and mission reflected a sense of dominance in Europe, Italian conceptions were fundamentally more integrationist, even federalist in nature. What is particularly interesting in relation to this thesis is that in contrast to Britain and France, Italian preoccupations with preserving independence against the encroachment of European integration were minimal. When this greater predisposition to federalism is considered in the context of the absence of emphasis on defence in Italian mentality discussed in Chapters Eight and Nine, an inkling of the

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<sup>50</sup> On. Pacciardi, *Discussioni*, Vol.39, 26 July 1957, p.34598.

<sup>51</sup> On. Pacciardi, *Discussioni*, Vol.39, 26 July 1957, p.34599

<sup>52</sup> On. Martino Gaetano, *Discussioni*, Vol.38, 26 July 1957, p.34606; On. Pacciardi, *Discussioni*, Vol.38, 26 July 1957, p.34602.



impact of defence on Italy's European identity, while not explicit, begins nonetheless to surface.

## Independence

Indeed, Italian preoccupations with independence were to some extent perceived in a distinctly European sphere. It is intriguing, for instance, to note reaction in the Italian Parliament to two of the main international events of the period– the Soviet invasion of Hungary and the Suez Affair of 1956. Western Europe's inability to influence either event in a sense helped to define the Italian conception of Western Europe itself, leading to the portrayal of both Hungary and Suez in a distinctly European context. Hungary, for instance, was described as a drama of *European* impotence....' while Suez was a 'challenge' to '*Europe*', an '....old and glorious Europe ...without flags....' <sup>53</sup>

The British and French responses to Suez were also portrayed in a distinctly European context; a 'second-rate dictator,' it was argued, had challenged Europe, but France and England had been forced to '....abandon the field humiliated by the preeminent interests of Russia and the United States.'<sup>54</sup> Another Member of Parliament echoed this sentiment more explicitly;

.... what happened after [Suez] showed us that it was not just French and English interests at stake on the Suez Canal...[but] the life of the whole European continent. We saw then Europe divide itself even against its own interests and we did not see on the part of the ally [the United States] that comprehension which would have been necessary initially... This lesson gives a fundamental political significance to the treaty. Europe has to be an entity capable of being the partner, not the subject, of its ally [the U.S.A.]. In underlining this concept – which is both a national and European concept – we mean to reconfirm ...loyalty and faithfulness to this ally, but on the basis of reciprocal equality, consecrated not solely with documents, but *above all in the reality of an effective political, economic and military capability* [emphasis added].<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> On. Pasini, Discussioni, Vol.38, 18 July 1956, p.34010. See also 'L'Europa e l'Africa' Popolo 5 March 1957.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> On. Lucifero, Discussioni, Vol.39, 26 July 1957, p.34613.



Western European political and military impotence consequently sharpened the perception of the need for solidarity to preserve both national *and* European independence. The inability of individual states to defend their independence and their national values in the absence of European unity was a plight with which Italy easily identified, and was portrayed as one of the prime imperatives of European solidarity.<sup>56</sup> Even the economy was discussed in the context of the need for an ‘economic defence’ of Europe’s independence; the realization that Europe was being overtaken in economic influence by the United States was presented as a ‘....motivation for European unity.’<sup>57</sup>

Europe should therefore not wait ‘....passively...to find a master....’<sup>58</sup> but ensure that she was able to defend herself as an entity, and not just as part of the free world. Europe had to be ‘.... a Europe which, if worse comes to worst, *is able to defend herself* with her own weapons, *without depending on the weapons of anyone else* [emphasis added].’<sup>59</sup>

## Freedom

In the context of the threat of dominance from both the Soviet Union and the United States, the question of independence was bound to the preservation of national *and* European freedom. To some extent, defence of freedom formed part of the Italian sense of national mission in much the same way as it did in Britain and France:

....Italy has the right, or rather the duty...[to assume] the defence of the minor peoples who can still see in us, as they saw a hundred years ago in our Risorgimento...the beacon for the most lost and oppressed peoples...This is a duty which can give us once again a mission in the world [emphasis added].<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> On. Pella in ‘Rilancio Europeo e Pool Atlantico’ Popolo 15 January 1956.

<sup>57</sup> On. Pasini, Discussioni, Vol.38, 18 July 1956, p.34009.

<sup>58</sup> On. Pasini, Discussioni, Vol.38, 18 July 1956, p.34011.

<sup>59</sup> On. Malagodi, Discussioni, Vol.38, 20 July 1956, p.34183.

<sup>60</sup> On. Cantalupo, Discussioni, Vol.27, 12 June 1956, p.25908. See also a speech by President Gronchi in Paris reported in ‘Il Discorso di Gronchi al Quai d’Orsay’ Corriere 27 April 1956; ‘Prolemi Europei e Pace Mondiale’ Popolo 1 July 1957.



### *Voluntarism and Integration*

Again, however, freedom retained an essentially *integrationist* dimension in Italian national mentality that extended beyond the *internationalist* sense of mission evident in Britain and France. The Italian emphasis on the nation as a *voluntary* association of peoples meant that in Italian mentality the concept of the nation was based not on race, or any other primordial aspect, but on the *willing subscription* to common values and ideals. In the Italian conception, therefore, freedom was less a marker of political sovereignty than an idealistic marker that defined the nation culturally along *voluntarist* principles.

This conception favoured a belief in the possibility of a common European identity based on common principles and values – including freedom – that could be *voluntarily* ascribed to. A voluntarily united Europe would represent freedom, and guarantee freedom not just to the six initial signatories, but to all those who might *wish* to join them in the future.<sup>61</sup> Similarly, it was argued that Europe should be ‘....open to all those who believe in our values, and who will believe in our values....’<sup>62</sup>

### *Defending European Freedom*

It was in the context of challenges to freedom that defence exerted a powerful impact on Italian conceptualizations of Europe. The Center and Right remained adamant that peace should not be secured at the expense of Italian – and European – values of freedom and democracy.<sup>63</sup> In the context of the Cold War, freedom needed to be defended from those that sought to encroach upon it.<sup>64</sup> The imperatives of defence helped to both entrench the relationship between Italian and European freedom and to crystallize the conceptualization of Europe as the home of individual and political liberty.

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<sup>61</sup> On. Foresi, *Discussioni*, Vol.38, 19 July 1957, p.34119.

<sup>62</sup> On. Pella, *Discussioni*, Vol.39, 30 July 1957, p.34774.

<sup>63</sup> See, for instance, ‘Quattro Obbiettivi Fondamentali per l’Italia’ *Corriere* 17 October 1957.



In the past, it was argued, attempts to unify Europe through force had been ‘...fortunately destined to fail because of the reaction of the European spirit, which is essentially the spirit of freedom.’<sup>65</sup> Such efforts were still doomed to failure, and while Russia wanted to dominate the world, the West – Europe in particular – was ‘...tuned to the ideal rhythm of freedom, to which we ascend in the luminosity of our tradition.’<sup>66</sup> After all, even the early advocates of a unified Europe had urged the exclusion of Russia, ‘...which is the enemy of the liberal mission of the European peoples....’<sup>67</sup> The situation today was no different; Russia was the enemy that sought to force the weak into submission, and against which Europe had to unite to defend herself.<sup>68</sup>

### Civilization

The threat from the East and the perceived need for defence in turn sharpened the conceptualization of a Europe united by a common history and ‘Western and Christian’ civilization.<sup>69</sup> Europe, even the ‘Little Europe’ of the Six was portrayed as the ‘...cradle of today’s world civilization....’,<sup>70</sup> the continent ‘...from which...civilization was born,’<sup>71</sup> with a ‘....glorious past as pioneer of civilization....’<sup>72</sup> It was not just a common civilization that gave Europe an identity, but her status as the birthplace of civilization itself. An almost spiritual quality was attributed to Europe, by the Center in particular, which is perhaps not surprising given the dominance of the *Christian* Democrats in Parliament. As one member expressed it, European integration was to take the shape of

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<sup>64</sup> See, for instance, ‘Problemi Europei e Pace Mondiale’ *Popolo* 1 July 1957.

<sup>65</sup> On. Malagodi, *Discussioni*, Vol.38, 20 July 1956, p.34170.

<sup>66</sup> On. Caramia, *Discussioni*, Vol.39, 25 July 1957, p.34494.

<sup>67</sup> On. Pasini, *Discussioni*, Vol.38, 18 July 1956, pp.34008-34009.

<sup>68</sup> On. Caramia, *Discussioni*, Vol.39, 25 July 1957, p.34494.

<sup>69</sup> On. Pella, *Discussioni*, Vol.40, 15 October 1957, p.36462.

<sup>70</sup> On. Foresi, *Discussioni*, Vol.38, 19 July 1956, p.34119.

<sup>71</sup> On. Romualdi, *Discussioni*, Vol.39, 26 July 1957, p.34628.

<sup>72</sup> On. Cavalli, *Discussioni*, Vol.38, 20 July 1956, p.34158.

‘....a cultural, political and spiritual unity....’<sup>73</sup> Europe, in other words, was “....not only a grouping of peoples, rich in glorious memories and civilized traditions, but a continent with its own soul which must live.”<sup>74</sup>

However, only stable cooperation among Europe’s peoples would allow Europe to survive as a ‘....spiritual homeland, in other words as a permanent creative source of those values and sentiments and ideals to which it is our duty to remain faithful for our sake, for our ...human dignity, for the continuity and development of our very civilization.’<sup>75</sup>

It is not hard to understand why, within this conception, the Common Market was thus considered to be more than an economic vehicle,<sup>76</sup> but rather an ‘....instrument of progress and affirmation of European civilization.’<sup>77</sup> Within the Common Market, not only the economic aspects, but also the cultural and idealist values of member states, (the ‘light of European civilization’) could be harmonized and strengthened, invested with power as ‘....permanent values of international life.’<sup>78</sup>

Such a prestigious basis for Europe’s identity sat uneasily, however, with the continent’s reduced post-war status. European unity, it was argued, was the ‘very foundation’ of this Western, yet global, civilization, and a ‘rediscovered’<sup>79</sup> unity was thus perceived as the means to strengthen Europe so that she could ‘....become again, even in reduced circumstances, mistress of herself, and ... continue to be, not only on the

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<sup>73</sup> On. Geremia, Discussioni, Vol.39, 25 July 1957, p.34490.

<sup>74</sup> On. Colitto, Discussioni, Vol. 27, 12 June 1956, p.25826, quoting On. Martino speaking in Strasbourg.

<sup>75</sup> On. Martino Gaetano, Discussioni, Vol.39, 26 July 1957, p.34611-34612.

<sup>76</sup> See, for example, On. Rubinacci, Discussioni, Vol.39, 25 July p.34502.

<sup>77</sup> On. Pasini, Discussioni, Vol.38, 18 July 1956, pp.34020.

<sup>78</sup> On. Rubinacci, Discussioni, Vol.40, 11 October 1957, p.36398.

<sup>79</sup> On. Triosi, Discussioni, Vol.38, 19 July 1956, p.34128.



economic level, but also on the moral and political level, the primary element of civilization and of peace.’<sup>80</sup>

The only forceful dissent to this conceptualization of European civilization was expressed by the Communist Party, who questioned the validity of ‘....these so-called European ideals’, asking why they should ‘....accept the idea of this defence of western civilization?.... We fight against this civilization, which is capitalist civilization; we do not accept this hypocrisy.’<sup>81</sup>

Nevertheless, the majority perspective expressed in parliamentary debates on Europe reflected a concept of civilization in which Italy had a universal mission founded in the historical entwinement of Italian and European history. The Italian announcement accompanying the signing of the Rome Treaty in 1955 is indicative:

It was in Rome, already capital of the ancient world, that the political, legal and social bases of our current civilization were brilliantly laid. So today...in this very Rome, we lay the pillars for a new Europe that we hope will be unified, prosperous and strong, as she was under the Imperial Rome of the Caesars.<sup>82</sup>

For both the Center and the Right, then, European unity was a desirable goal, and voting for the European treaties held a ‘deeper significance,’

....that of serving the cause of this ancient continent, that can still, rediscovering its unity, have something to say in the world in the name of its millennia of experience. It will be above all a token of our very firm intention that Italy, within this Europe that is being formed, will once again serve the cause of human civilization.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> On. Penazzato, *Discussioni*, Vol.39, 25 July 1957, p.34543.

<sup>81</sup> On. Pajetta, *Discussioni*, Vol. 39, 25 July 1957, p.34521.

<sup>82</sup> On. Cavallaro, *Discussioni*, Vol.38. 18 July 1956, pp. 34023-34024.

<sup>83</sup> On. Pella, *Discussioni*, Vol.39, 30 July 1957, p.34774.



### DEFENCE: A BASIS FOR ITALY'S EUROPEAN IDENTITY?

In the midst of the Cold War, Europe, as a cohesive and specific civilization, was thrown into relief by the perceived

....implacable clash between European civilization and Russia's Asian civilization, which we have never thought of injecting into ours; our civilization has always remained uncontaminated, even when Peter the Great tried to Europeanize his country ....<sup>84</sup>

Under threat from an external enemy, certain values that Western European states were believed to have in common were accentuated, while unity itself was in certain instances attributed to the exigencies of defence. It was argued, for example, that

....Europe was perhaps made more alive and real in the Eighth Century than today, and it was precisely against Islam that European unity was made. In fact, two and a half centuries ago Eugene of Savoia...in fighting the battle of Belgrade, fought the battle of Europe, the battle of the Mediterranean, thwarting the danger of Islamic supremacy in the Mediterranean and in Western Europe.<sup>85</sup>

In the present, a new, real, and powerful threat fostered a perception of West European identity. The Cold War between East and West, in which the Soviet Union posed a physical threat to the West, also highlighted the perception of certain 'spiritual' values that the West, and Western Europe in particular, had in common. Indeed, in the context of a visit to Paris in 1956, President Gronchi declared that while peace was necessary to the preservation of Europe's civilization, peace could not be achieved at the cost of

....surrendering those principles in which we have always believed and which constitute the essence and the prestige of our spiritual life. Such a peace, to paraphrase the imagery of Montesquieu, would be tantamount to the sad and desperate abandon of a city about to be *invaded by the enemy*....[emphasis added]<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> On. Caramia, Discussioni, Vol.39, 25 July 1957, pp.34493-34494.

<sup>85</sup> On. De Marsanich, Discussioni, Vol.3, 23 October 1958, p.3173.

<sup>86</sup> President Gronchi in 'Il Discorso di Gronchi al Quai d'Orsay' Corriere 27 April 1956. See also 'Cooperazione fra l'Italia e Germania per Realizzare gli Obbiettivi Comuni' Popolo 7 February 1956.



The question of civilization thus featured prominently in the context of the threat it faced from the East. While Europe was described as a ‘....depository of those greater values that are destined to the defence and protection of our civilization....’<sup>87</sup>, it was also suggested that the ‘....union of the European peoples....’ had been inspired ‘....*for the defence of our common western civilization....*’<sup>88</sup> European solidarity, after all, had ‘.... existed since the end of the war (World War II) and *is rendered vital and vibrant through a state of defence against the external*, and of cordiality based on new common ideals...[emphasis added].’<sup>89</sup>

Therefore, while the Center and Right rarely seriously questioned the principle of Atlantic security,<sup>90</sup> the notion of Europe was not lost within the wider NATO defensive alliance. Rather, it was within the context of defence that a clearer image of Europe itself emerged in the Italian debates. For example, when commenting on defensive institutions such as NATO, the WEU or the failed EDC initiative, one member expressed the opinion that ‘all’ such institutions, whether they succeeded or failed were ‘....the expression of a *willingness to defend [itself] that Europe asserts in relation to its own rights, its own culture, its own history, its own civilization* [emphasis added].’<sup>91</sup>

### ***Defending Peace through Unity***

Perhaps paradoxically, peace was portrayed as an essential pre-requisite to the defence of Europe’s culture and civilization, and to the ‘preservation’ of its ‘spiritual achievements.’<sup>92</sup> In part, this peace was dependant upon the successful resolution of the ‘German problem,’ a problem to which a European security system seemed to offer a

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<sup>87</sup> On. Vedovato, *Discussioni*, Vol.38, 20 July 1956, p.34169.

<sup>88</sup> On. Rubinacci, *Discussioni*, Vol.39, 25 July 1957, p.34502.

<sup>89</sup> On. Foresi, *Discussioni*, Vol.38, 19 July 1956, p.34119.

<sup>90</sup> For an indication of the Italian Government’s commitment to European security within NATO see ‘Martino Riafferma la Fedeltà dell’ Italia alla Politica Atlantica’ *Corriere* 14 April 1956; ‘Pella Illustra le Direttive della Politica Estera Italiana’ *Corriere* 1 August 1957.

<sup>91</sup> On. Pasini *Discussioni*, Vol.38, 18 July 1956, p.34009.



solution.<sup>93</sup> More fundamentally, peace was perceived to depend upon the realization of European unity, which would bring an end to the politics of nationalism. Unified Europe, even a Europe of the Six, was presented as a powerful instrument for the furthering of peace:

Little Europe is a great hope! She is above all a moral force, and a promise of peace and prosperity for the ancient continent. *Nationalist policy, failed in blood and destruction, cedes its place now to the politics of solidarity among free peoples* [emphasis added].<sup>94</sup>

On a basic level, it was quite clear in the minds of many that war, the Second World War in particular, had demonstrated the inadequacy of the international order, and the need to construct a new one:

The war, which bloodied and destroyed our streets, was the tragic and solemn demonstration of the failure of the free regulation of international relations. We have worked on the ruins of this failure with the precise knowledge of the causes that determined it. This failure taught us that it is not sufficient to reconstruct internal order, but that it is necessary to create a new international order founded on the permanent and continuous cooperation of peoples.<sup>95</sup>

This new order in turn depended on the willingness to frame individual interests and problems in a western context, a willingness that represented ‘...a mentality, a new consciousness that Governments and ruling classes need to *acquire and diffuse* throughout public opinion [emphasis added].’<sup>96</sup>

Interestingly, the lessons of war were explicitly placed in the context of European defence; war was itself a threat to Europe and the drive for unity stemmed from

....a dramatic experience: the last conflagrations of cosmic proportions demonstrate Europe’s *inability to defend herself*. At stake is the survival of Europe. This old continent, that had dominated the world, lost its economic

<sup>92</sup> See, for instance, a speech by President Gronchi reported in ‘Il discorso di Gronchi al Quai d’Orsay’ *Corriere* 27 April 1956.

<sup>93</sup> See, for example, ‘Solidarietà Necessaria’ *Stampa* 25 April 1956.

<sup>94</sup> On. Cavallaro, *Discussioni*, Vol.38. 18 July 1956, pp. 34024. See also ‘L’Europa Domani’ *Stampa* 19 July 1957.

<sup>95</sup> On. Martino Gaetano, *Discussioni*, Vol.39, 26 July 1957, p.34611. See also ‘La Comunità Europea per l’Energia Nucleare’ *Popolo* 20 January 1956.

<sup>96</sup> President Gronchi paraphrased in ‘Il Papa Afferma che l’Europa ha bisogno di Unità e di Pace’ *Popolo* 5 November 1957.



supremacy, found itself at the mercy of the preponderant shapes that were asserting themselves beyond her borders. This war repeated...the lesson of history: the *total futility of wars of conquest*. Europe came out of this war in truly pitiful condition; half reduced to a colonial state, and the other considered more or less as a political protectorate [emphasis added].<sup>97</sup>

The reconstituted unity of post-war Europe was thus to be characterized above all by a peaceful coexistence of Europe's nations, an end to the wars which had for centuries ravaged the continent, and the development of a Europe able to '....contribute to the peaceful development of the world....'<sup>98</sup>

A reaction against war and a desire for peace therefore provided the imperatives for the construction of Europe, a Europe in which '[t]he sense of solidarity among nations is born of suffering and pain.'<sup>99</sup> The following statement from the Center-Right is equally indicative; 'We believe in Europe maybe more than you do; *we believe with the willingness of those who have suffered for Europe* [emphasis added].'<sup>100</sup>

Indeed, at the conclusion of a visit to Paris in 1956, President Gronchi gave a speech at Bligny, site of two First World War cemeteries, one Italian, one French, in which the link between sacrifice and European unity was explicitly made. Addressing a crowd of French and Italians, Gronchi remarked that the two neighbouring countries had been divided for twenty years by Italy's Fascist regime, making the sacrifice of their war-dead seem, for a time, in vain. Now, however, France and Italy had been united by the shared experience of a new sacrifice; that of the Resistance.<sup>101</sup>

It was also within this context that the concept of Europe was argued to be most profoundly disseminating from the elite to the masses:

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<sup>97</sup> On. Pasini, *Discussioni*, Vol.38, 18 July 1956, p.34009.

<sup>98</sup> On. Malagodi, *Discussioni*, Vol.38, 20 July 1957, p.34183.

<sup>99</sup> On. Cavallaro, *Discussioni*, Vol.38, 18 July 1956, p.34024.

<sup>100</sup> On. Anfuso, *Discussioni*, Vol.27, 12 June 1956, p.25922.

<sup>101</sup> 'Ridare all' Europa la Fiducia in se Stessa e Creare una Terza Forza tra I Due Blocchi' *Corriere* 29 April 1956



And what is the substantial difference that divides and separates the Europeanists of past centuries from the Europeanism of today? The difference, gentlemen of the opposition, is that here it is no longer a question of mythical visions of philosophers, it is no longer a question of the dreams of poets, or dreams of political institutions, such as Mazzini and Cattaneo had, it is a Europeanism that from *elite* is becoming a Europeanism of the people, a Europeanism of the masses. *These European peoples that bear the scars, the experiences, of two wars that were lost by all, these peoples fear repeating the experience of the past. It is from here that the most profound Europeanist faith is born, which has sustained the realization of the Common Market* [emphasis added].<sup>102</sup>

The common experiences and lessons of war of *individual* nations were consequently contributing to rendering Europe tangible as an entity, and *national* experiences of defence were being entwined in an imagery of *European* unity. Significantly, Italy's own experiences of defence and her self-perception as a losing party in the Second World War appeared to be lending themselves not just to the conceptualization of Europe, but also to the perception that Italy was a full participant in a shared European identity. The emphasis on wars that were 'lost by all' was missing in British and to some extent even French mentality. Indeed, Italian reaction against war had been significant enough to explicitly warrant a constitutional allowance for limitations on national sovereignty in the context of integration:

....Italy, as well as repudiating war as an instrument of aggression against the freedom of other peoples and as a means of resolving international disputes, consents, in conditions of parity with other States, to the limitations of sovereignty necessary for an organization which will ensure peace and justice among nations....<sup>103</sup>

Italy was therefore part of that Europe which had been battered and worn by war, and Italians, by virtue of 'hard apprenticeship' had learnt that Europe was their 'homeland.'<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> On. Pasini *Discussioni*, Vol.38, 18 July 1956, p.34009.

<sup>103</sup> On. Triosi, *Discussioni*, Vol.38, 19 July 1956, p.34123, referring to Article 11 of the Italian Constitution.

<sup>104</sup> On. Anfuso, *Discussioni*, Vol.3, 24 October 1958, p.3359.



## CONCLUSION

The cultural, spiritual and philosophical dimensions of Italian identity discussed in Chapters Eight and Nine were manifest in Italian debate on entry to the European Economic Community, and were reflected in Italian conceptions of Europe and of Italy's role within Europe. Ideas of Italian greatness, mission, civilization, freedom and independence echoed in Italian conceptualizations of European identity. What impact then, can be attributed to defence in relation to Italian conceptualizations of Europe?

Firstly, the historical record of defence in Italy and the ensuing lack of emphasis on defence in Italian mentality encouraged a more cultural, spiritual idea of the nation that facilitated the conceptualization of a cultural and spiritual European identity in which Italy shared. The construction of Italian identity along cultural lines before the construction of a political identity – in part a product of early failures in defence (see Chapter Eight) – also facilitated the conceptualization of Europe as a 'latent entity', existing through time and waiting to be 'rediscovered' or 'reconstructed'. In Italian national mentality, a European identity that was not artificial, but had nonetheless to be constructed, was therefore not a paradox.

Secondly, it can be argued that the historical lack of emphasis on defence in Italian identity, combined with the de-legitimization of the means of defence following the Second World War, reduced the symbolic value of defence as a marker of sovereignty and national specificity in Italy. This reduction lowered one of the barriers to the perception of a common European identity that remained potent in Britain and France and encouraged the belief that the principle of *voluntarism* could serve as the basis for a European identity that could be willingly ascribed to.

Thirdly, and conversely, a lack of emphasis on defence in Italy increased the *imperatives* for European integration. As in Britain and France, there existed an



awareness of developing threats to European states that could not be easily met in isolation. The perception of the need to defend against common threats not only gave momentum to the idea of integration but also facilitated the conceptualization of a common European identity. In Italy, however, the lack of emphasis on defence was reflected in inferiority in the *means* of defence, highlighting the dependence of Italian security on integration to probably a greater extent than in Britain and France.

Finally, while Britain and France were able to maintain the ‘myth’ of independent national defence in the Second World War, Italy’s experience allowed little scope for a similar myth of national preservation. Therefore, the resonance of a European identity founded in a community of defeated peoples willing to unite to avoid future wars was stronger in Italy than in Britain, which had a culture of defensive strength, and even than in France, where the perception of defeat was minimized through an emphasis on the imagery of defence.

In summary, neither the imagery nor the means of defence were as prominent in Italian national mentality as in Britain and France. Moreover, in all the respects outlined above, the absence of an emphasis on defence in Italian mentality contributed to the construction of an essentially integrationist Italian identity. While independence had emerged as a national value in the context of foreign domination, the lack of unified, defensive experiences in Italian history and the de-legitimization of defence in Italian mentality contributed to mitigating the resonance of national independence in favour of an emphasis on *integrationist internationalism*.

Indeed, defence appears to have been an instrumental factor in distinguishing the *internationalist* dimensions of national mentality in Britain and France (for instance national ideas of greatness and mission that demanded the exportation of national values) from the *integrationist* dimensions of national mentality manifest in Italy.



# CONCLUSION

The primary objective of the thesis was to examine the impact of defence on the construction of national and European identity. Implicitly, this examination required an assessment of whether collective identity is constructed or primordial. This assessment was firstly undertaken through a review of the theoretical debate on national identity.

## CENTRAL HYPOTHESES

**Hypothesis I: National identity essentially rests on *constructed* rather than *inherent* mental attitudes, and is consequently *instrumentalist* rather than *primordial* in nature.**

### *Primordialism versus Instrumentalism - Origins of Nations*

A review of the theoretical debate on national identity and an analysis of national mentality in Britain, France and Italy strongly support the conclusion that neither the nation nor national identity are primordial and inherent. Rather, the nation and national identity are constructed through historical chance and deliberate effort. Construction may be the inadvertent by-product of elite efforts to centralize power and bolster legitimacy, or the work of 'nationalist' elites, for whom 'creation' or 'mobilization' of the nation are central objectives.

In either case, what is critical is the delineation and definition of 'the nation', generally by religious or secular elites. The 'nation' in other words, must be given an identity before individuals can recognize and share in a common national identity and the role of elites is central in this regard.

### *Aspects of Nations*

A review of the theoretical debate did not surface any pre-requisite traits or characteristics of nations and national identity. Authors tend to agree that nations are

groups of individuals that *believe* themselves to constitute a nation but place varying degrees of emphasis on the constituent attributes upon which this belief is based. In fact, a review of the theoretical debate leads to the conclusion that the only defining common characteristic of nations is their constructed nature. The identities of nations are constructed by religious and secular elites on the foundations of myths and symbolism that come to define particular links between the nation and its members. These individual myths and symbols and their origins are enshrined as unique to each nation, aiding its conceptualization. The conceptualization of the nation is disseminated through transmission mechanisms ranging from pictorial, religious symbolism to the mass communication methods of the modern era. If the nation is successfully preserved from external and internal threat, its worth, and the symbolism and basis of that worth, are confirmed, reinforcing their validity. Tests of the nation – be they ideological or physical – provide the context and impetus for reaffirmation of individuals' commitment to the nation and its values.

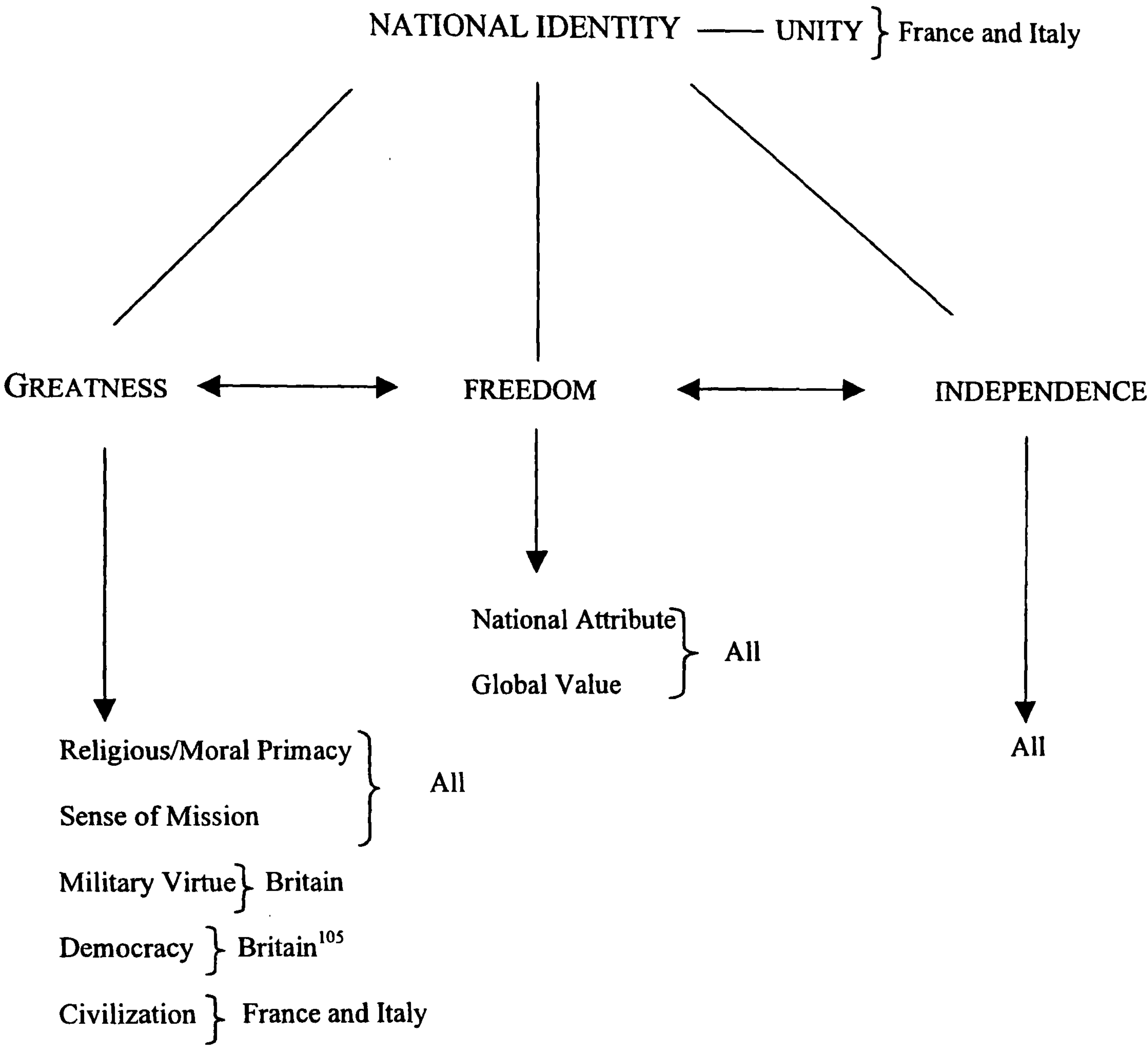
National identity is therefore the product of accidental circumstance and deliberate construction, whereby a sum of factors such as perception of history, geography, common laws and governance are imbued with the significance of national unity and specificity. Imagery and symbolism emphasize national differentiation over common human experience and thus contribute to the construction, not just reflection, of national identity.

**Hypothesis II: Defence plays an instrumental role in the construction and reinforcement of national identity.**

The thesis subsequently examined the impact of defence on the construction of national identity in Britain, France and Italy. A series of 'historical snapshots' of each country and an analysis of elite debate on defence and Europe revealed the instrumental impact defence exerts on national identity. The impact of defence was manifest in the



construction of three principal foundations of national specificity that were paradoxically common to each state; a sense of greatness; an attachment to freedom as an object reality and abstract value; and a preoccupation with the attainment and/or preservation of national independence. The impact of defence was also evident in the different emphasis placed on unity in Britain, France and Italy (see Fig. 3).



**Figure 3.**  
**Overview: Aspects and Myths of National Identity in Britain, France and Italy.**

<sup>105</sup> The association between Britain and democracy is not to imply that democracy occupies no place in French or Italian mentality. In the debates examined, however, democracy was more prominently emphasized in Britain than in France or Italy. Likewise, civilization recurred as a theme in British debates, but generally within the context of democracy, freedom or moral primacy.

### *Greatness*

Greatness, while epitomized differently in each state, nonetheless represented each nation's *raison d'être*, and typically included a sense of religious and moral primacy and a belief in a national mission entrenched through experiences and imagery of defence. In each country examined, early elite conceptualizations of the nation were constructed in relation to a sense of inherent greatness that both 'evidenced' and justified the preordained right of the nation to exist. This thesis examined aspects of national greatness such as morality, democracy or civilization individually; each, however, is a trait or value that contributes to the aggrandizement of the larger whole.

In Britain, the earliest conceptualizations of national greatness were constructed in relation to notions of religious primacy, dependent in large measure on the idea of a national mission in defence of the Church, and, later, against the 'Catholic' enemy. In the context of foreign threats – particularly from France – this defensive mission evolved to include the defence of 'national' values such as freedom and democracy, which were crystallized as 'national characteristics' in contrast to a threatening and opposing 'Other.' This concept of 'national greatness' was still evident in the early 1960s, albeit in the less overt manifestation of a belief in the 'right to influence.'<sup>106</sup> In the modern era, defence continued to play a pivotal role in preserving British confidence in its own greatness and moral superiority, as evidenced by repeated associations between the armed forces and British (moral) influence and fierce rejections of pacifist sentiment.

In France also, early conceptualizations of national greatness were constructed on the basis of religious primacy and defensive mission. Defensive encounters with England, and later Britain, provided the impetus, context and imagery to entrench certain

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<sup>106</sup> An explanation of Britain's conspicuous lack of reference to 'greatness' (particularly in contrast to the French preoccupation with 'grandeur') may be her implicitly stated belief that 'truly great' nations need not profess their greatness. See, for example, Chapter Four, pp.126-127.



traits and values, such as civilization, as ‘specifically’ French. As history progressed, however, some notable defeats (particularly the defeat by Prussia in 1870 and the collapse of 1940) threatened to undermine the concept of French national greatness. Nevertheless, defence remained the context of choice for French efforts to regenerate myths of national greatness, or to at least prevent their decline in the face of contradictory evidence. Even in the post-war era, defence was instrumental in bolstering the idea of national grandeur in the face of declining global influence and prestige.

In contrast to the French experience, Italy’s splintered existence before unification meant that Italian conceptualizations of national greatness and mission could not draw from the annals of national defence. Even before Italian unification, however, defence served to undermine, rather than enhance, the notion of Italian greatness. Successful defence at the Battle of Forno, for instance, might have increased contemporary (and retrospective) confidence in the idea of national unity, entrenching its protagonists as ‘Italian Patriots’ and confirming the idea of the nation. Instead, conspicuous failures in defence undermined not only the attainment of national unity but also the degree to which defence could serve as the context for, and a driver of, national identity.

While a defensive context in the First World War to some extent realized a more popular conceptualization of the Italian nation, attempts to reaffirm Italian national greatness through recourse to militarism during the Fascist era proved singularly ineffective. Military failures undermined the notion of an Italian greatness founded on military strength; more significantly, Italian engagements during the Second World War lacked a truly defensive context. Ironically, the Fascist emphasis on militarism delegitimized defence as a context for the regeneration of post-war Italian identity and increased the importance of peace in the conceptualization of Italian greatness, denying elites a powerful resource exploited by French post-war elites.



### *Independence*

It follows that for 'national greatness' to be realized, the nation must be independent. The attainment and maintenance of independence from foreign influence are generally perceived as pre-requisites for the nation's realization of its greatness. In this sense, independence is synonymous with sovereignty. While the national idea may develop and persist in the absence of independence, independence ultimately functions as a marker of 'nation status' and its attainment and preservation provide symbolic confirmation of the nation's right to exist. Defence against threats to independence is thus intrinsically linked to national identity, both in practical and symbolic terms.

In Britain, successful defence and the preservation of independence from foreign conquest repeatedly confirmed the belief in national greatness, and provided an abundant reservoir of imagery for the reaffirmation of national identity. From Agincourt to the Battle of Britain, successful defensive engagements against seemingly overwhelming odds entwined defence and the preservation of independence with the notion of national greatness. Indeed, in Britain, defence itself can be said to constitute an almost 'core' aspect of national identity, to the extent that the myth of the 'warrior nation' emerges as a distinct aspect of British national mentality.

In contrast to Britain, France's record in defending the nation was more checkered. Nevertheless, and probably consequentially, in France, the role of defence in 'preserving' the nation, and its independence, was even greater metaphorically and symbolically than in practice. The recognition that past losses of independence had compromised French grandeur placed a great premium on preserving the appearance of national independence. Thus, while national independence and national grandeur were threatened by defensive failures, both were preserved, at the very least in principle, through an emphasis by political elites on national defence. This emphasis was still very



much in evidence in the 1950s, when those who questioned the viability of French independence were accused of manifesting the same tendencies as Pétain.<sup>107</sup>

In Italy, the notion of independence was a key driver of the idea of the nation long before the realization of the Italian state. The gradual dissemination of the idea of Italian greatness among the intelligentsia took place in the context of calls for national independence from foreign oppression. Paradoxically, however, the inability of the Italian peninsula to achieve such independence both practically and symbolically undermined the idea of the Italian nation. Practically, ongoing foreign domination impeded national, political unity, even as it provided the motivating context to rally the ‘Italian nation.’ Symbolically, even in the absence of a unified state, failures in defending symbols of the Italian nation-in-waiting from foreign conquest weakened the ‘evidence’ that Italian elites could point to as confirmation of Italy’s preordained nationhood.

Once attained, national independence remained fragile. Defence, which in Britain and France had been practically and symbolically instrumental in retaining independence and confirming ideas of national greatness, exerted an almost diametrically opposite effect in Italy, to the extent that by the end of the Second World War, the Italian constitution specifically allowed for the pooling of national sovereignty in the pursuit of European integration. By the 1950s, even as the Resistance was being touted as the modern Risorgimento, it was difficult to deny that Italian independence had been paradoxically secured through the intervention of the Allies, upon whom Italian independence continued to depend. Indeed, despite Italian emphasis on cultural and spiritual greatness, debate from the 1950s illustrates that the inability of Italy to convincingly claim ownership of the ‘preservation’ of its own independence exerted a detrimental impact on conceptualizations of Italian identity.

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<sup>107</sup> See Chapter Six of this thesis, p.224..

*Freedom*

In each country examined, the notion of independence was closely entwined with that of freedom. Independence from external influence was significant not just as a marker of nation-status and confirmation of national greatness, but also because it guaranteed the ‘freedom’ of the nation to pursue its national destiny both internally and externally. The rhetoric of national independence thus often translated to an emphasis on freedom or liberty both as a practical reality and as a value to be cherished and defended at home and abroad.

In Britain and France, defence – largely against one another – was an influential context for the entrenchment of ‘freedom’ by elites as a national characteristic and value. External threats to independence and freedom provided the impetus to contrast internal liberty with external oppression. Freedom was thus instilled as a national virtue in contrast to the inherently oppressive tendencies attributed to the threatening enemy. In propaganda warning the population against the oppression that would follow conquest, and in casting the enemy as inherently repressive, elites established an ‘exclusive’ link between their population and freedom as a value. From this association stemmed the notion of a national defensive mission to preserve freedom globally- a mission appropriated by both Britain and France. Ironically, freedom, portrayed as a defining and differentiating characteristic of each nation, became a resonant ‘national’ trait in both Britain and France.

In pre-unification Italy, the notion of freedom was almost synonymous with that of independence. Elite calls for defence against foreign oppression were essentially calls for national freedom. The construction of national identity in the context of foreign rule contributed to a conceptualization of freedom as the prerequisite condition for the existence of the nation – only as free individuals could Italians willingly constitute the



nation. This principle of voluntarism translated easily to the international stage. Elite calls for national freedom were made on the principle of freedom for all nations and formed the basis of a spiritual, if not material, defensive mission for Italy even before the advent of a unified Italian state.

During the First World War this defensive mission took on a more practical hue and the myth of the Italian nation as defender of universal national principles of independence and freedom for a time invigorated the idea of the Italian nation. With the advent of Fascism, however, the place of freedom in Italian mentality was replaced with the rhetoric and oppression of the Party. Fascism, which turned to military expansionism in its efforts to enhance the greatness of the Italian nation, eroded one of the values that had thus far most sustained the idea of Italian identity.

After the Second World War, defence, in the incarnation of the Resistance, was influential in reestablishing the place of freedom in Italian national mentality. The imagery of 'national' resistance against Fascism was used by post-war elites to mitigate Italian culpability for the Fascist era and to disassociate Italians from the aggressive militarism Fascism had espoused. Nevertheless, even in relation to the Resistance, defence was a less than straightforward context for the regeneration of Italian national identity; it was difficult to purport that the freedom reclaimed by the *Resistenza* had been achieved by Italian hands alone. Moreover, while France enhanced its ownership of the liberation through an emphasis on defensive imagery, Italy's disassociation from defence did not lend itself to such conjuring.

### *Unity*

One further relationship may be observed with respect to the impact of defence on national identity: the relationship between defence and national unity. In Britain, where successful defence confirmed national greatness and occupied a prominent place in

national mentality, little concern over national unity was evident. In France, preoccupations with preserving national unity intensified in the wake of failures in national defence, which came to represent ‘evidence’ of the catastrophic consequences of national disunity. Defence therefore served not only as the impetus, but also as the context for the reaffirmation of national unity, even as such appeals paradoxically indicated the fragility of the national unity in question. In Italy, the historical lack of experiences of, and emphasis on, national defence, may have most profoundly undermined the construction of national unity. At the very least, elite debates from the 1950s are suggestive of the injurious impacts of the denigration of defence on national consciousness and unity. Ultimately, Italian elites were less successful than their French counterparts in making recourse to the imagery of defence to mitigate the divisive influences of the Second World War.

### ***The Identity-Construction Process***

In summary, different national experiences of defence, and varying degrees of recourse made by national elites to defence, were reflected in the national mentalities of Britain, France and Italy. In Britain, defence provided a powerful context for conceptualizing and disseminating notions of national specificity and greatness. Successful defence – preservation – of the nation confirmed these notions and offered both the impetus and imagery for the reaffirmation of national identity. Successful defence became so entwined with ideas of national greatness that in Britain, defence itself became an almost intrinsic aspect of national identity. It is thus perhaps not coincidental that cracks in national confidence intensified in the early 1960s, with the growing realization that national defence could no longer sustain either the independence or the greatness of the nation.



In France too, defence was an important context for the early conceptualization and dissemination of the idea of national greatness and specificity. Moreover, through symbolism if not always in practice, defence contributed to the preservation of the greatness and specificity of the French nation. While the successes of later defensive engagements were more questionable, an obstinate and ongoing recourse to defensive imagery nevertheless confirmed and sustained myths of national greatness even in the wake of 'national humiliations' such as the Franco-Prussian war and the collapse of 1940. Indeed, particularly in the wake of defeat, French recourse to the imagery of defence reaffirmed the greatness and worth of the nation.

Early elite conceptualizations of Italian identity were crystallized in the context of calls for defence against foreign oppression and rallying cries for independence. Yet the absence of a unified state and centralized government elites limited the degree to which defence could function as a vehicle for formally disseminating ideas of the nation to broader segments of the population. Nor could pre-unification Italian elites resort to the rhetoric of 'national defence' – preservation – in the same manner as their French and British counterparts. Moreover, where success in defence – even by regional, rather than national, elites – might have formed the basis of imagery confirming the national idea, military failures threatened instead to erode embryonic confidence in the idea of the Italian nation. Furthermore, in contrast to France, Italy responded to military failures by rejecting rather than embracing the imagery of defence, and by conceptualizing its identity on cultural and spiritual, rather than political and military, lines.

Thus, even unified Italy lacked the experiences and imagery of national defence that in Britain and France so contributed to confirming and reaffirming ideas of national greatness and specificity. One might have expected that the absence of a defensive context would have had little impact on a national identity constructed primarily on



cultural and spiritual rather than political and military lines. Two observations, however, can be made. Firstly, one cannot discount the impact that failures in defence had on delaying the attainment of political unity and in encouraging the construction of national identity on cultural foundations. Secondly, despite this cultural emphasis, the absence of a defensive context and the de-legitimization of defensive imagery that followed the Fascist era had a detrimental impact on the ability of post-war elites to regenerate Italian national identity that remained in evidence in the 1950s.

In contrast to Britain, which had a relatively unblemished record in defence, and to France, which was able to resort to defensive imagery to bolster its identity, a prevailing discomfort and unease with the military, and a declared commitment to pacifism as a basis for national greatness, combined to further erode the place of defence in Italian national consciousness. While one cannot definitively claim that an absence of emphasis on defence undermined Italian national identity, one must at least acknowledge the likelihood that an inability to make recourse to defence hindered the efforts of elites to regenerate post-war identity. The lack of emphasis on defence in post-war Italy – as at other times in the country's history – diluted the reservoir of imagery that was so significant in constructing national identity in Britain and France.

It is important to note that while defence alone may not have 'created' the national idea in each country examined, it was nevertheless a powerful context for sharpening perceptions of difference into conceptualizations of national specificity and greatness. The impact of defence on national identity is perhaps nowhere as sharply evident as in the relationship between the preservation of the nation and confirmation of the national idea. Whereas successes in defence confirmed the greatness and superiority of the nation, failures in defence were in each country interpreted as 'punishment' for having deviated from the path of national righteousness, or for having abandoned core 'national values.'



Such failures often prompted a reaffirmation of commitments to historical ‘national’ traits and values, or even a shift in the foundations upon which national identity was conceptualized. In each circumstance, the profound effect that defence can exert on the national psyche is evident.

It is equally significant that the impact of defence in shaping and healing the national psyche was more profound than that of war or aggressive militarism. The defensive character (rather than reality) of military engagements was often emphasized by elites espousing notions of national greatness and moral superiority. It is little coincidence that aggressive militarism did little to fundamentally strengthen Italian national identity, nor that the most emotive appeals to national unity were made in the context of national *defence*.

**Hypothesis III: Defence plays an instrumental role in shaping national, and shared, ‘European identities.’**

Defence has also been instrumental in constructing national ‘European identities’ both in terms of its impact in shaping national mentalities, and in relation to the impact of the imperatives of defence in constructing ‘European’ national identities. Fundamentally, however, the extent to which defence occupied a central place in national mentality impacted on the degree of integration to which each country was predisposed.

### ***Britain***

As discussed above, in Britain, the impact of defence contributed to conceptualization of national specificity and greatness that was increasingly shaped in contrast to the idea of Europe. The sense of ‘specific superiority’ to Europe was heavily influenced by experiences and imagery of defence; Britain defending her heritage from Catholic Europe; Britain ‘standing alone’ against the threat of conquest from the Continent; Britain resolute in contrast to a weak and capitulating Europe; Britain

victorious, Europe defeated. Indeed, many of the attributes that shaped British national mentality – and which had been entrenched in the context of defence - reflected a sense of innate specificity born in a superiority that precluded a sense of truly common shared identity.

Moreover, defence was instrumental in constructing a relationship between independence, freedom and greatness that demanded an ongoing ‘isolation’ from European influence. Successful defence so confirmed the notion of Britain’s ‘island status’ that the idea of European integration became subject to interpretation as an act of humiliation and surrender.

Nevertheless, from at least the early 1960s, the imperatives of defence were becoming an increasingly important factor in bridging the gap between British ‘national’ and ‘European’ identities. The notion of independent defence was being challenged by the realities of the Cold War, straining the relationship between defence, independence and greatness, while at the same time disseminating a conceptualization of a Britain rendered ‘European’ by a shared vulnerability.

### *France*

In French mentality, historical experiences of defence reinforced, rather than undermined, an association between the French nation and Europe. In France, defence of Europe was an intrinsic aspect of the myth of national specificity and greatness. French ‘grandeur’ for example, was enhanced, not diminished, in relation to the defence of ‘European’ traits and values and the pursuit of European greatness. The ‘defensive mission’ – in the context of both success and failure – facilitated identification between French ‘national’ traits and values and European ones. Therefore, to some extent the imagery of defence served as a vehicle for the conceptualization, dissemination, preservation, confirmation, and reaffirmation of French and European identity. The great



emphasis elites placed on defence in the construction of national identity, however, ensured that European identity continued to serve primarily as an appendage to, and amplifier of, French specificity and greatness. Similarly, the emphasis of French ownership of this defensive mission ensured that France's conceptualization of its European identity was one of superiority within Europe, rather than to it.

Defence thus exerted a somewhat contradictory influence on France's European identity, resulting in a tension that was manifest in French attitudes towards European integration in the 1950s. While a prominent role in the European movement befitted French grandeur, a curtailment of independence did not. Hence France both introduced, and rejected, proposals for integration in the sphere of defence. As in Britain, however, by the 1950s, the imperatives of defence were becoming more influential in mitigating at least some French resistance to the dilution of sovereignty and independence.

### *Italy*

In Italy, the lack of emphasis on – and even conscious rejection of – defence in national mentality encouraged a more cultural, spiritual conceptualization of national identity that favoured a national 'European' identity constructed on similar foundations. Moreover, the minimal relationship between defensive imagery and the notion of independence reduced the symbolic value of defence as a marker of nationhood and sovereignty. In effect, while in Britain successful defence – and in France recourse to defensive imagery – confirmed the greatness of the nation and the virtue of sovereign independence, in Italy the myth of 'defence' as the means for 'national preservation' and the condition for national greatness had very little resonance. Consequently, the idea of relinquishing sovereignty, along with other 'defeated' Europeans in order to construct a European community aimed at avoiding future war was more readily accepted – at least

in principle – in an Italian national mentality founded on myths of ‘spiritual values’ and a commitment to peace.

The absence of emphasis on defence in Italian mentality therefore contributed to the construction of a fundamentally integrationist Italian identity in which the significance of national independence was mitigated by the notion of integrationist internationalism. Where in Britain and France the reality and/or the imagery of defence served to confirm the national idea, Italian failures contributed to at least a partial rejection of the idea of national sovereignty in favour of European integration. Indeed, defence appears to have been an instrumental factor in constructing the internationalist dimensions of national mentality in Britain and France (for instance national ideas of greatness and mission that demanded the exportation of national values) and the contrasting integrationist dimensions of national mentality manifest in Italy.

Nevertheless, the impact of defence on Italy’s European identity was significant. While not a primary participant in the military ‘preservation’ of Europe, Italy’s history as the object of the European ‘defensive mission’ reinforced the conceptualization of Italy as the embodiment of ‘European values’ being defended from ‘barbarian’ threats. To some extent, as evidenced by Italian debate during the 1950s, national weakness in defence reinforced the degree to which Italy identified with Europe as an entity, while a need for integration in defence contributed to Italy’s willingness to pool national sovereignty in the pursuit of European integration.

### ***The Identity of Europe vs. A Shared European Identity***

In summary, defence has been highly influential in defining, or conceptualizing Europe. Moreover, successful defence, or preservation of ‘European values’ against a threatening ‘Other’, be it a Muslim or Communist enemy, has contributed to the apparent confirmation of the validity and even superiority of European values and ideals. Yet it is



undeniable that this construction of the European idea has taken place against the backdrop of national identity. Especially in Britain and France, defence, the very factor that has encouraged the conception of Europe, has simultaneously served to entrench national identity. In terms of dissemination and reaffirmation in particular, European elites have faced competition, if not opposition, from national elites. The tomb of the unknown soldier for instance, may have come to exert resonance across Europe,<sup>108</sup> but the predominant symbolism and imagery of defence remains firmly within the national domain.

To argue that European elites have faced resistance in the dissemination of the European idea is not, however, to conclude that European identity is somehow more artificial than national identity. Nor should the significance of defence to the construction of European identity be dismissed. On the contrary, the influence of defence on national and European identity thus far indicates that defence should be given utmost consideration in the construction of European identity. As General de Gaulle wrote,

European unity can exist only if Europe constitutes a political entity which is separate from other entities. A personality. But there can be no European political personality, if Europe does not have its own personality as far as defence is concerned. *Politics always rests on defence* [emphasis added].<sup>109</sup>

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This thesis has sought to contribute to literature on national and European identity by providing a framework for the analysis of identity construction and by exploring the impact of defence on national and European identity in three states. It is hoped that the thesis will facilitate a better understanding of the mentalities that move state behavior, and in particular encourage consideration of the pivotal impact that defence can exert in this respect. Within this context, it is also hoped that the relevance of the thesis may

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<sup>108</sup> Hedetoft, *Nations*, p.44.

extend beyond identity-studies, and contribute to the tools and frameworks available for predicting state behavior and crafting policy accordingly.

There are a number of directions in which the work of the thesis could be expanded upon. Firstly, future studies could explore the relationship between freedom and identity outlined in the thesis. While the thesis concluded that there is an intrinsic and intricate relationship between defence and the concepts of national greatness, freedom and independence, there are numerous countries where freedom does not seem to appear in the rhetoric of national identity. How, for example, is freedom interpreted as a value in countries such as China or Iraq? Is national independence exalted above individual freedom? Can one really claim that in the absence of freedom there is no national identity? If not, is the impact of defence on national identity fundamentally different in countries where freedom is not incorporated into the tapestry of national identity? Further research might therefore contribute to clarifying whether greatness, independence and freedom are indeed 'universal' attributes of national or other collective identity, and to assessing whether the impact of defence on each is a constant independent variable.

Secondly, the current impact of defence on national and European identity could be examined in the context of the conceptual framework of the thesis. A number of more contemporary events, such as the Falklands conflict, the Gulf War, or even engagements in the Balkans could serve as a context for the analysis of national rhetoric in order to determine whether the impact of defence on national and European identity evident in the 1950s and 1960s is still in evidence today.

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<sup>109</sup> Charles de Gaulle, Lettres, Notes et Carnets: Janvier 1961-Décembre 1963 (Paris: Plon, 1986), pp.107-108.



Thirdly, the question of whether the European defence dimension is essential, or just conducive, to the construction of European identity could be further explored. On the basis of research undertaken, this thesis would argue that even if defence alone cannot create identity, identity created in the absence of defence is inherently more fragile. Therefore, even if one is skeptical of the emergence of a European identity founded in European defence (or even of the ability of Europeans to create a European defence) the question becomes: “can European identity be constructed in the absence of defence?” To test this hypothesis, it would be interesting to apply the methodology of the thesis to countries such as Japan or Germany, where, like Italy, defence as an instrument for the construction of national identity was denied to elites after the Second World War, or to countries like Belgium or Portugal, where the impact of defence on the construction of national identity may be not be immediately apparent. Within this context, one might examine what the impact might be on the identity of traditionally ‘pacifist’ countries if the ‘civilizing’ and ‘defensive’ mission of Europe gains definition in relation to humanitarian interventions, particularly if the United States withdraws from this role. Will, for instance, the ‘moral’ dimension of identity in countries such as Germany, which has defined its post war morality through a rejection of military action, increasingly demand participation, rather than abstinence, from ‘moral’ military engagements?

Fourthly, one might also ask whether countries that place little emphasis on defence are likely to feel more or less ‘European’ in the context of European defence. Again, it would be interesting to examine in depth the degree to which defence may impact the European identities of smaller partners in the European Union, either through a similar methodology to that adopted by this thesis or through a more contemporary examination of elite debate.

Finally, and intimately related, future research could assess the extent to which the defence dimension is essential, or conducive, to bridging the gap between East and West that was cleaved during the Cold War, and gauge where the next lines of identity will be drawn. Similarly, the conceptual framework of the thesis could help address whether a European Security and Defence Identity is likely to undermine transatlantic relations – not because of conflicts of interest or increasing competition – but because defence itself exerts a powerful impact on the construction of collective identity.

The thesis has sought to provide insights on the importance of defence on the construction of national and European identity. Evidently, the thesis raises as many questions as it has addressed. It is hoped that the research and analytical framework presented will facilitate future research on national, European or other forms of collective identity and contribute to a deeper understanding of the extent to which defence may – deliberately or otherwise – impact the construction of such identity. Given the ongoing salience of collective identity in international relations, this is a field of study that merits further inquiry.



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